

THE PRESS

BY

HENRY WICKHAM STEED

Author of

"THE HAPSBURG MONARCHY"

"THROUGH THIRTY YEARS"

"VITAL PEACE"

etc



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PREFACE

THIS book is, in the main, an essay on the British Press and the postulates of its freedom. Neither in form nor in substance is it a history or a handbook. Though the whole of it was written before the publication, in April, 1938, of the "Report on the British Press" by the group for Political and Economic Planning, known as "P E P," I have drawn upon that Report in revising the manuscript, and gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to its authors.

To Mr Stanley Morison, the well-known authority on printing, my thanks are due for much kindness and help, as also to Captain R J H Shaw and to Sir Roderick Jones.

None of these is in any way responsible for the opinions I have expressed. What I have written must stand or fall by its own truth or error.

W. S

CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
THE PRESS AND ITS FREEDOM INTRODUCTORY SURVEY	7
CHAPTER I	
THE WORTH OF FREEDOM	51
CHAPTER II	
THE PRESS AND THE STATE	66
CHAPTER III	
THE FINANCE OF THE PRESS	81
CHAPTER IV	
THE EVOLUTION OF NEWSPAPERS	106
CHAPTER V	
THE PRINTED WORD	118
CHAPTER VI	
CIRCULATION AND ADVERTISING	141
CHAPTER VII	
“ COMMERCIAL JOURNALISM ”	161
CHAPTER VIII	
THE PRESS AND THE LAW	177
CHAPTER IX	
NEWS-GETTING	193
CHAPTER X	
BROADCASTING AND THE PRESS	208
CHAPTER XI	
IN A NEWSPAPER OFFICE	224
CHAPTER XII	
THE IDEAL NEWSPAPER	243
POSTSCRIPT	249

THE PRESS AND ITS FREEDOM

INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

A STUDENT of political history, whose learning experience has clarified, said not long ago "The Press is the central problem of modern democracy" At first I wondered whether he saw truly. Then I guessed his meaning In his eyes the Press is still the chief means of giving a free people some notion of what is going on, the main vehicle alike of public information, public opinion and public criticism. He had said "democracy" and had meant "freedom," for democracy is the political form of freedom. Of all liberties, freedom to know, to speak and to criticise stands first And this freedom is the bugbear of tyrants.

The worth of free citizenship is to-day more widely and more loudly denied than it has ever been within living memory. Dictatorial systems which muzzle or control the Press and do away with freedom of speech and of public and private criticism, are claiming for themselves a degree of political and social efficiency superior to that of democracies How far is this claim warranted? Will it still be put forward at the end of a term of years comparable with the duration of successful democratic systems? No man can say We do not know what degree of lasting success dictatorships have yet attained The one thing they cannot tolerate is the freedom of public knowledge that goes to the forming of sound judgment We know what they tell us We know, too, that not all they have told us has been borne out by events So we wait Meanwhile we think the case against democratic freedom not proven

Admittedly, democratic systems are not easy to work. They demand a high degree of civilisation. When Lord Baldwin alleged that democracies are always two years behind dictatorships, was he not begging the question in his own favour? Successful democracy demands, in well-nigh equal measure, the fulfilment of two difficult conditions. Of these the one is a loftier and more virile sense of individual citizenship than is required, or tolerated, by systems which make it the duty of all citizens to think alike and to obey orders. The other is vigilant foresight on the part of the representative leaders of self-governing communities.

Of such communities the late President Masaryk finely wrote that "self-government is self-control," not a mere negation of authority. Dictatorships assume, on the contrary, that "government from above" is a good in itself, and control by one man best of all. One leader, at the head of one party, commanding all the resources of the "State" and wielding all its coercive powers over the Press and over individual lives, is at once their method and their ideal. Neither method nor ideal leaves any room for a free Press and a Press unfree can have no higher standing, as an institution, than that of a gramophone industry.

The democratic ideal, on the other hand, is that free citizens shall use their individual rights and liberties to serve the common weal. How can citizens do this if knowledge of what bears upon the common weal be withheld from them or be given only to an extent and in a form that may suit the purposes of their rulers? Unless there be freedom to know, to agree or to disagree, there cannot be enlightened support of the men charged with the conduct of public affairs. In other words, there cannot exist the instructed public opinion which is the mainstay of democratic Governments.

Conversely, the absence of informed criticism or agreement, and the restriction of public knowledge, tend to

breed the corruption and other forms of inefficiency to which dictatorial systems are peculiarly liable. The same lack of public control allows abuses to grow until they reach a point at which a community is compelled to conspire or to rebel against its rulers, seeing that no other means of redress can be found. Thus the end of dictatorship may be chaos and social disaster. From this standpoint a free Press, conducted in a spirit of responsible citizenship, may be at once the central problem and the main safeguard of modern democracy.

True though it be that the Press is no longer the only medium through which information or news reaches the public, and that wireless broadcasting plays a growing part in the life of communities, the informative and educative influence of broadcasting is rather an extension than a restriction of the functions of the Press. In this country, at all events, the "radio" does not collect news on its own account. It spreads news gathered by regular press agencies, and if it adds comment of its own, or comment by speakers of known authority, it does but forestall or follow the work of newspapers. Moreover, the appeal of verbal broadcasting is to the ear, not to the eye. Listeners who may wish to think over what they have heard are usually glad to "see it in print" so that they can judge it more maturely. And what is the printing of comment or criticism orally delivered if not an extension of the Press?

Whether the Press be looked upon as a hydra-headed monster, or as the safeguard of freedom in democratic communities, news is its life-blood. The outstanding function of the Press is to gather, to make known and to interpret news of public interest. This is a function socially valuable and, uprightly discharged with a sense of responsibility, highly honourable. Upon it the safety of a community may depend. Since the beginning of life on this planet news has played a vital part in the human and

even in the animal world. The scenting of danger by animals is "news" that their safety is threatened. Why have organised communities and their rulers always striven to get prompt and trustworthy information upon matters that may affect their welfare? Ambassadors and couriers, spies and soothsayers, swift vessels and hard riders have all been used to this end, to say nothing of telegraph and telephone. The essence of news is to give timely warning of what has happened or may happen, and the proper circulation of news is a social service second to none.

Of this service journalism, or "the Press," is still the chief instrument. Its form has been determined by the art of printing, and changed by the transformation of that art into a rapid mechanical process. Only when the invention of metal types, set in steel frames, had made possible the rapid reproduction of oral or written statements could the newspaper press be evolved, and not until the advent of democratic political institutions and the emancipation of the middle class—the "third estate"—could the Press (sometimes called the "fourth estate") begin to flourish. Pamphlets and pamphleteers there had been, and gazettes or periodicals mainly devoted to the discussion of public affairs. But in this country independent daily newspapers of national importance, as distinguished from local news-sheets and news-letters, are little older than the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Even then they were apt to be adjuncts of printing establishments. Necessarily the connection between the progress of the printers' craft and the practice of news-getting and news distribution has always been close.

The growth of the Press, properly so-called, really dates from the recognition of news-getting as a legitimate private business. Governments naturally sought to control or to influence this business either by direct censorship or by placing it under fiscal or penal restrictions. Did it not trench upon the fields of statecraft

and diplomacy which were carefully-guarded official preserves? Even when the Press had gained freedom, responsible journalists felt bound to use discretion in publishing news and commenting upon it. They set up a tacit censorship of their own. They felt that while democratic communities have a right in normal times to be informed of all that concerns their welfare, those who inform them must act, in a sense, as wardens of the public mind. The freedom of the Press, that is to say, the absence of arbitrary official restrictions upon the dissemination of news and of comment upon news, is a pledge of public safety. It ensures that all sides of a case shall be heard before a free community makes up its mind. In times of unusual stress, such as war, some degree of official control may be indispensable lest false, exaggerated or indiscreet news cause panic and endanger the common weal. From this it follows that the measure of freedom which the Press is entitled to enjoy is subject to the welfare of the community as a whole, and cannot be determined solely by the private interests of newspapers or their owners. But since ideas may differ upon the degree of knowledge that is good for a community, the principle has gained recognition that freedom should be given the benefit of any doubt there may be and that a larger measure of it is better than a smaller. Experience has shown that abuses of freedom by irresponsible newspapers are best restrained by the certainty that other and more responsible newspapers, to say nothing of Parliament, will also be free to denounce such abuses.

This question of responsibility raises the further question of the conditions under which newspapers are produced and journalists ply their trade, or, if their trade be a craft, what standards of craftsmanship are required of them. To-day the statement is warranted that the actual, mechanical production of newspapers is less a craft than an industry. Newspaper proprietors, indeed,

are wont to refer to their "industry" So the public may ask what entitles newspaper owners to turn the printing and the selling of news—which is a social service—into a private business or industry. What proofs of mental capacity or of moral integrity have they to give before they are allowed to profit by ministering to public curiosity? If the truthful answer be "None, except commercial success," serious conclusions may be drawn. If, on the other hand, the answer be that newspaper owners feel bound to manage their industry with some sense of public trusteeship, complicated issues arise.

No newspaper can long be produced without the help of its editorial staff, or journalists. Who and what are "journalists"? Though efforts have been and are made to train journalists for their work, and "schools of journalism" exist, it is broadly true that journalists pass no professional examinations, take no special degrees and hold no charter. The news they gather and the comment they write has to be sold to the public, usually under stress of competition. As news-getters and news-sellers, journalists may hardly seem entitled to claim a higher status than that of any cheapjack whose vociferations draw pence from passers-by. Yet the functions they actually discharge give them a public standing above that of men whose only aim is to catch the eye or the ear of their fellow men. Whence comes this standing?

In the last resort I think it comes from instinctive public recognition that journalism proper is in the nature of a vocation, that it is something more than a craft, something other than an industry, something between an art and a ministry. Journalists proper are unofficial public servants whose purpose is to serve the community. Such journalists are born, not made. They may need training and experience, yet no degree of training and no amount of experience can make journalists of them unless they have in them the vital spark that distinguishes the journalist proper from the newspaper hand.

Few things are more foolish or, sometimes, more tragic than for young men to imagine that, because they have done well at school or university and have a knack of stringing words and phrases together on paper, they will be journalists if they get "a job on the press" It may take them years to find out that they have missed their calling, the vocation without which newspaper work may be for them soulless drudgery. They would have done better to ply another trade, for they might as well have been lawyers or civil servants, bank clerks or stock-brokers Of newspaper men without the vital spark there is no lack Journalists by vocation are rarer. They are men and women with minds and standards of judgment of their own, with an (often unconfessed) zeal for the spread of educative knowledge, and with a determination to go through the newspaper mill in the hope of finding one day a chance to tell the public what they believe it ought to know These journalists are "the Press" in the true sense of the term; and if ever the "newspaper industry" seeks to dispense with them and to look upon itself solely or chiefly as a business for the enrichment of its owners or shareholders, it will be doomed as a public institution.

Yet journalists by vocation are often reminded of the gap that divides their ideal from the practical approach to it. Experience teaches them that their craft may be an industry, a business, as well as a liberal profession, an art or a ministry; that it may be all these things by turns and, at moments, all of them together They know that, as its name implies, journalism consists in gathering, printing and publishing news of events, day by day, with or without comment or opinion. They know that this is responsible work, that news is expected to be true and the comment upon it to be honest But news, when printed and published, has to be sold. The newspaper-buying public may not like unpleasant news or distasteful opinions The production of newspapers, as an enter-

prise, and the men who produce them, depend upon public favour. How far are they entitled to court public favour? To what extent do they betray their trust if they trim their news or their opinions to suit the public taste? Are they more blameworthy if they trim news or withhold their full convictions upon it than is a tradesman who gives short weight or the manufacturer who adulterates his products?

In my own view they are. The underlying principle that governs, or should govern, the Press is that the gathering and selling of news and views is essentially a public trust. It is based upon a tacit contract with the public that the news shall be true to the best of the knowledge and belief of those who offer it for sale, and that their comment upon it shall be sincere according to their lights. The same kind of trust is implied in the relationship between a doctor and his patients, though medical men work under the discipline of a professional code and are obliged to hold medical degrees, whereas journalism is a "free" profession subject only to the external restrictions which the law of the land may place upon it. But the dishonest doctor can harm, at worst, only a few dozen or a few score patients, while a dishonest journalist may poison the minds of hundreds of thousands or millions of his fellow men. And the answer to the question whether a journalist who sells, or is a party to selling, news that he knows to be false or only partly true, or who trims opinions so as to make them palatable, is more guilty than a tradesman who gives short weight or a manufacturer who offers adulterated goods, depends upon the further question whether the spreading of false statements or false ideas is more harmful than the sale of material wares under false pretences. If it be held, as I think it should be held, that false ideas are more harmful than adulterated sugar or soap, the journalist who betrays his trust is more blameworthy than a dishonest tradesman. Journalism, as the

basis of the "newspaper industry," holds a special position because its raw material is really the public mind and it trades chiefly in "moral values"

In a sense the trusteeship or moral responsibility of the Press is akin to that of ministers of religion, statesmen and leaders of public thought. In another sense it is subject to industrial and mercantile conditions that do not affect these other trustees in the same degree. The newspaper industry needs large amounts of capital. Day by day it consumes thousands of tons of "newsprint," that is to say, the more or less white paper on which newspapers are printed. "Newsprint" is made of wood pulp into which the trunks of myriad trees, usually white spruce, are ground down by powerful mills. Most of the dried wood pulp used to make "newsprint" in this country is brought from overseas by special steamers. Thousands of rills of printer's ink flow day after day to the semi-circular metal plates which "clothe" the cylinders of the intricate and costly machines that print, fold and cut newspapers by scores of thousands an hour. Capital is needed to collect news from all parts of the world, to pay the men who gather it and send it, and to cover the cost of transmission, and further capital to pay the salaries and wages of editorial, mechanical and business staffs at home. Big premises, from which the printed sheets can be swiftly distributed, and fleets of motor cars, or even aeroplanes, are wanted for the work of distribution. And the revenue from the actual sale of newspapers may cover scarcely one-half of the cost of producing them. The other half, and whatever profit may be made, have to be drawn from advertisers who, as they provide the major proportion of newspaper revenue, may wish to have their say in the choice of the news to be printed or of the comment upon it.

Advertising, or the sale of publicity, tends increasingly to influence "the Press." By it newspapers live, and

the necessity of getting and keeping it affects both the newspaper industry and journalism proper in more ways than one. The price of the publicity a newspaper can sell depends largely upon the number, though partly also upon the quality and purchasing-power, of its readers. If, in the conscientious exercise of a moral trusteeship for the public, the editorial staff of a newspaper offend readers and lose circulation, the business managers or the proprietors of the newspaper will soon have a bone to pick with them. Only a high-minded or far-sighted newspaper owner is willing to risk loss of circulation, and therefore of advertising revenue, by supporting what may be "unpopular" causes or by insisting upon distasteful truths. Far-sighted or resolute owners have faced and may still be ready to face this risk because they are convinced that their judgment, or that of their editorial staffs, is not only right but will be proved right in the long run and that public confidence will then return to them in larger measure than before. Yet, as a rule, journalists are not allowed to forget that "the Press," which they may regard as a trusteeship, cannot be altogether independent of the counting-house.

In spite of this "the Press" remains something more than a device for selling publicity to tradesmen or manufacturers. It is a sort of co-operative society in which the public is a partner. If, in the last resort, its power resides in the appeal of journalism to the public mind, the owners, editors or managers of newspapers would be foolish indeed to imagine that the public mind is passive, ready to yield to any kind of treatment. Newspapers can and do act upon public opinion, but public opinion acts quite as powerfully upon them. For this reason, among others, the Press is always tempted to give the public "what the public wants", and journalists who can guess what the public really "wants" are worth their weight in gold. Some of them, together with the owners of the papers they serve, may think the average

of public taste so low that the lower their appeal to it the more successful will they be. These have their reward. Their method is to "play down" to the public. Other editors and owners who think it their duty to enlighten and to educate their readers, may have too lofty an idea of what the public wants. They will have reason to learn that while the public likes to be amused or interested, it dislikes schoolmastering of any kind. And a third class of newspaper proprietors and journalists think that the right method is to humour the public to a certain extent by trying to give it what is good for it in so attractive a form that it will like what it gets. These are the wisest.

What does the public really want? It does not want and, sooner or later, ceases to buy or to read dull newspapers. Hence the first commandment of the journalistic decalogue "Thou shalt not be dull." True though it be that a certain class of staid newspaper readers abhor "sensationalism" and enjoy nothing so much as the assurance that everything is well in the best of all possible worlds, they are not the class upon whom enterprising newspapers can rely for circulation or whose preferences determine "public opinion." One fundamental fact which journals and journalists who cater for the taste of this class often forget is that the main function of a newspaper is to give "news," and that to miss or to be behindhand with "the news" is a cardinal journalistic sin. "News" may be defined as something exceptional, something out of the ordinary run. When only the expected happens people are prone to say "There is no news." The cynical phrase of a famous newspaper owner "Vice is news and virtue isn't," assumed that virtue is ordinary, vice extraordinary. Its cynicism lay in the circumstance that stories of vice have a fascination even for virtuous minds and that "to make the most of them" is a species of speculative immorality which is itself vicious.

This matter of "news" is really important. Behind it lies not only the question of giving the public "what it wants," but the far weightier question of telling the public the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth as nearly as the truth can be ascertained and told. It may be as blameworthy for some newspapers to water down or hide the truth as it is for others to blazon it forth with startling headlines or comment. Very steady and robust journalistic minds are needed to strike and to hold a proper balance between what is essential in the public interest and what is meretricious pandering to the lower popular tastes. The best journalists are those who can strike and hold this balance, but who incline always to give the public more news rather than less. "All the news that's fit to print" is the sage motto of the greatest American journal, the *New York Times*, and it is the faculty of sure discernment between news which is fit and news which is not fit to print that distinguishes healthy from unhealthy newspaper enterprise.

Yet even healthy news needs to be given in an attractive form. Some years ago I was invited to address a gathering of earnest men and women upon the part the Press might play in fostering international peace. This meeting was held towards the close of a conference organised under high ecclesiastical auspices; and the organisers were depressed by the sad fact that hardly a word of the proceedings had been reported in any newspaper. The reason was plain. An atmosphere of pious dullness prevailed. The audience seemed prayerfully disconsolate. I was presented to them by a devout chairman who said that they were about to have the privilege of listening to "a journalist with ideals." In a sanctimonious tone he added, "A journalist with ideals is an unspeakable blessing, but a journalist without ideals is satanic."

The audience applauded fervently. So I began by

saying that I agreed with one word the Chairman had used, the word "unspeakable", for a journalist with ideals who should parade them round a newspaper office at night, when news was rolling in by the yard and the printers were gasping for space, would be an unspeakable nuisance

Before my hearers had recovered from the shock of this brutal beginning, I went on to tell them that if none of their meetings had been reported in the Press it was because those who had taken part in them had fallen into the sin of dullness. I bade them remember that, in order to enlist the support of the Press for their noble cause, they must do or say something which would be worth reporting—something new, profound, striking or original. I reminded them that they had been talking against war—which is a very dangerous, full-blooded and interesting affair—and had utterly failed to show that peace could be equally dangerous, full-blooded and interesting. I said they were really competing for space in newspapers against the pressure of advertisements of which some might be worth several pounds per inch of type; and I asked them seriously to reflect whether anything that had been said at any of their meetings was honestly worth several pounds an inch.

Despite, or because of, this effrontery, the audience listened attentively to what I had to say. A lively discussion followed. At the end I heard a pious lady remark to a Right Reverend Bishop "It is all very shocking, but it is the only interesting meeting we have had." The newspapers reported it fully next day.

Rough though my tongue may have been, it spoke the truth. Many journalists are impenitent idealists. They need to be. The conditions of their work are often hard, their task is never finished. They are not, as a rule, commercially-minded, however large are the business profits which others extract from their efforts. The scent of printer's ink may be more grateful to their nostrils

than rare perfume, and the sight of the printed slips of paper, called "pulls" or "galley proofs," suffice to make them forget that they themselves pull like galley slaves. By association with each other they may seek to lessen their hours of work and to add some security of tenure to positions woefully insecure. They may wake up one day to find that they have been sold like a flock of sheep by one newspaper owner to another, and that the new owner proposes to "cut down costs" by dismissing men who have served the paper for years and might not find it easy to adapt themselves to another paper even could they be sure that it would employ them.

These are some of the drawbacks of life "on the Press." They are the risks of the trade, and not all of them can be removed or seriously diminished without the greater risk of destroying the spirit of adventure which is as the breath of life to a good journalist and to a good newspaper. "The Press" cannot be a free profession and a sheltered industry at one and the same time. Journalists cannot be as secure in their "jobs" as civil servants are, and still enjoy freedom to think and to write as their consciences or their ideals may move them to do in the public interest. They have to take the rough with the smooth, and often to take their professional lives in their hands. Not otherwise can they truly serve the public.

If this be the case of working journalists, what of the men who employ them, the newspaper owners, the "captains" of the "newspaper industry"? I am inclined to believe that, like journalists proper, good newspaper owners are born, not made. The greatest of them have undeniably been men of genius. John Walter II of *The Times*, Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World*, Adolph Ochs of the *New York Times*, the first Lord Burnham of the *Daily Telegraph*, and Lord Northcliffe of the *Daily Mail* and (for some fifteen years) of *The Times*, were all in their several ways men

endowed with the peculiar talents required for the work—or what Northcliffe would call, on sunny days, “the crime”—of “committing newspapers.” Of living owners it would be invidious to speak. It may safely be affirmed that not all of them are, though some may be, similarly endowed. But all of them have now to deal with conditions which, whether they like it or not, expose the “freedom of the Press,” and therefore the Press itself, to very subtle dangers.

Chief among these is the danger that the public may lose confidence in the Press as a free institution. The recent rise of personal “news-letters” giving or purporting to give information which daily journals withhold or ignore, is a sign of dwindling public confidence in the Press. If the plight of London is not yet as extreme as that of New York—where the number of responsible morning newspapers has now been reduced to two by failures and amalgamations—the same forces seem to be at work in Great Britain as in America. These forces tend to restrict the channels of public information. It stands to reason that when the public of a great city has a choice between only two “organs of opinion” it is unlikely to be supplied with the same variety and fullness of news and of comment as when five or six independent journals are competing for its favour. In this way one aspect of public freedom is curtailed. Nor is it a matter of indifference that an old-established journal should cease publication or be “absorbed” by another journal financially stronger or backed by a powerful and wealthy “newspaper combine,” as the *Morning Post* was absorbed not long ago by the *Daily Telegraph*. Not only does a vehicle of public opinion disappear—a quality of opinion that may not find other means of expression—but the shares of the absorbing journal or “newspaper combine” may be held by investors whose chief concern with “the Press” is the size of the dividends payable upon their capital. Here the

weightiest problem of a "free Press" crops up again: How to ensure a fair balance between the commercial independence that is indispensable to an unfettered press, and the business interests that tend to encroach upon journalistic freedom?

This problem is the harder to solve because of the costliness of modern newspaper production. More than a generation ago the late Lord Rosebery drew attention to this side of what was not then but now is called the "newspaper industry." He pointed out that while, in theory, anybody can start a journal in competition with existing newspapers, the amount of capital needed for a new venture is so large as to make the risk of failure almost prohibitive. The owners of existing newspapers, he claimed, held an effective monopoly in the "organs of public opinion"—a state of things that might be harmful to the community unless newspaper owners were themselves more public-spirited and more keenly alive to their responsibility for public welfare than is usually the case with business men.

The question which Lord Rosebery thus raised has not become less acute since he spoke. The ownership of newspapers has been concentrated in fewer hands—without necessarily rendering the surviving papers more independent. While, in several instances, circulations have vastly increased, the fact remains that the greatest influence is not always wielded by the most widely-read newspapers. Large circulations may be built up upon a varied range of readers for whose differing tastes newspaper owners and editors feel bound to cater. Anxious not to lose subscribers, they are tempted to be neutral and colourless, to "hedge" on crucial issues, and to avoid dullness by giving prominence to incidents or episodes that have little general significance. Journals with smaller circulations but with firm and enlightened policies can and do influence the intelligent minority of the public whose opinions sway those of the unthinking

majority But some of these journals have a hard fight for life, and their continued existence does not altogether solve the problem which faces a free community, most of whose organs of public information and opinion are controlled by a few wealthy newspaper companies.

As matters stand to-day the goodness or the badness of newspaper influence turns more than ever upon the characters of the men who own or control "the Press." If they are men of strong public spirit they can be of great service to the community If they are mere money-makers or, still worse, petulant and self-opinionated dictators, they can work much mischief. If they are journalists proper themselves, as the best of them have been and are, they have a lively sense of the dimensions in which they move, and seek rather to educate than to dictate Laying no claim to personal infallibility, they respect public opinion and guide it even as they express it They know that their enterprise is a "commercial proposition", but they know, too, that some of its terms are non-commercial and may, on a short view, even seem anti-commercial Enlightened newspaper owners have, to my knowledge, deliberately thrown away advertisement revenue in order to teach domineering advertisers a lesson and to warn editorial staffs against subservience to solely "business" considerations On the other hand, professedly high-minded and independent journals have also been controlled by men who bowed humbly to the dictates of large advertisers and insisted that editorial policy should be so shaped as to curry favour with them Such cases of conscience, or lack of conscience, lie beyond the ken of readers

To upright newspaper owners and journalists the problem of a free Press presents itself as a constant search for a fair balance between public service and economic independence, and in this search the technique of publicity needs to be closely studied Both the editorial

and the advertisement staffs of newspapers have to judge what position on a printed page will attract most attention, whither the reader's eye is likely to turn, where the most striking news should be placed, what variety of type should be used for headlines and text, and what for comment. The upper half of a page, "above the fold," is carefully reserved for important items, since readers are wont to cast their eyes upward, and usually towards the right. This is why the right-hand top corner of the outside page of a newspaper is the most valuable for advertising purposes. It is true that some newspapers place the chief news of the day at the top of the left-hand columns of a page, knowing that their readers are accustomed to look for it there. But adroit newspaper men often vary their paper's "make-up" so as to convey an impression of alertness and to avoid "sameness." Valuable news may be "smothered" if there is no variety in its presentation, and readers in a hurry dislike "digging out" news for themselves instead of having their attention drawn to it by suitable typographical devices.

Within these limits the struggle for circulation and for advertisement revenue dominates the form and the style of nearly every newspaper. It is a struggle that may go to unseemly lengths unless it be kept within bounds by newspapers owners and by journalists themselves. Generally speaking, the public cares little about the methods by which it is supplied with news and views. It cares much for getting news and views promptly, and it is likely to forsake newspapers which miss or are late with the news, or which persist in expressing opinions that run counter to public feeling. It is a hard thing for a newspaper to be better than the public which reads it.

The standing and the influence of the Press can also be damaged, as they have been damaged in recent years, by attempts to get big circulations in ways that have nothing to do with journalism proper—by offering insurance

benefits to readers, by newspaper competitions and other tricks designed to secure an increase in nominal circulation as a lever for extracting higher rates from advertisers. Apart from their unworthiness as journalism these tricks may defraud advertisers by inducing people to become "registered readers" of newspapers merely for the insurance benefits offered, or to buy several copies of a paper for the sake of its competition coupons, not for the purpose of reading a single copy. In such cases advertisers pay for a degree of publicity they do not actually receive.

Other discreditable means of attracting attention to a newspaper are known as "stunts." A "stunt" is an effort to palm off on the public as something original or important, a sensation that exists only in the imagination of its authors. It is a perversion of the spirit of healthy newspaper enterprise. Every journalist knows the value of "exclusive" news. A paper which "gets the news" more quickly or more fully than its rivals soon sees its circulation figures go up. People talk about it. Readers of other newspapers feel humiliated and tend to buy the successful paper. Hence the eagerness of well-conducted newspapers, and the heavy outlay they incur, to get original news of important events. Nowadays the stream of news that flows automatically into newspaper offices through the news agencies is so great that most newspapers have on hand, night after night, twice or thrice as much "copy" as they would need to fill their columns. The initial task of editorial staffs thus becomes one of selection and compression so as to leave room for more original matter. If newspapers were to confine themselves to the material which news agencies supply to all of them, there would be little reason why the public should prefer one journal to another.

In its news, no less than in its views, a successful paper must, therefore, bear the stamp of originality. Much has been said and written against the modern journalistic

tendency to be original at all costs, to move heaven and earth for the sake of what used to be called a "beat" and is now known as a "scoop." But this tendency springs from a healthy instinct—the instinct that a paper which is frequently ahead of its rivals will impress the public as being better organised and more competent than they, and on that account better worth reading. The result is a legitimate increase in circulation and, eventually, the growth of advertisement revenue. These things are not merely incidental, they are essential to the freedom of the Press. And this is why "stunts" or bogus "scoops" are both immoral in themselves and a sin against the spirit of journalism.

Hardly less harmful to good journalism are, on the other hand, those newspapers which push their dislike of "stunts" and sensationalism to the point of imagining that their readers will be relieved to find that there is nothing to worry about. These newspapers deliberately tone down the news and treat even remarkable occurrences as though they were not of unusual importance. They seem to cater for a small class of elderly and "highly respectable" persons who read one staid newspaper all their lives and trust it because it rarely upsets their minds. The readers of such newspapers die off in time and leave few or none to replace them. Then comes the distressing moment when the circulation of staid organs begins to sag—and nothing is harder in the whole range of newspaper enterprise than to reawaken public interest in a journal whose circulation has seriously declined. It is not merely that a new public cannot easily be reached, it is that the "rot" among readers has been accompanied by another kind of "rot" among the staffs which bring out those newspapers. They had forgotten that time was working against them. They had got into the habit of looking upon their journals as intrinsically "superior" to other journals and, unconsciously, upon

themselves as "superior journalists" They had ignored the unpleasant truth that the best newspapers cease to be the best if they miss or are late with the news, waste space in their "make-up" and are ponderously "judgmatic" or evasive in their views instead of giving a clear, firm lead to their readers When a newspaper staff has fallen into habits of this kind, something like an earthquake may be needed to rouse it from lethargy

A famous newspaper owner who had come to the rescue of an old-established journal which was suffering from a "superiority complex" among its staff and from mortality among its elder readers used to urge its editorial staff to study daily the death announcements on its front page He pointed out that a high proportion of the departed were probably subscribers who had "taken in" that journal all their lives, and he asked the staff to consider whether they were doing anything to make sure that new subscribers would replace those who were gone

In newspaper enterprise, as elsewhere, life goes to life. Constant renovation must counteract crystallisation and decay. As an exercise in public psychology, journalism always calls for fresh ideas and new blood Some elderly men lose touch with youth and cannot see that what interested them in bygone years no longer interests younger people in the same way With rare exceptions, such men are unwilling to venture on untrodden paths. They may form a valuable element and a steadying influence in the life of a newspaper, yet be unable to give it new life It is not a question of putting new wine into old bottles but of mixing judiciously new wine with old, and this is an operation which youth alone is hardly competent to perform Older men with fresh, unblunted minds must do it, and these men are the salt of the Press. They combine experience with ardour and help to keep newspapers sanely "alive"

Alertness on the part of their staffs is not only essential

to the production of good newspapers but is needed to detect changes in the habits and moods of the public. With the advent of the cinematograph a revolution began in the journalistic world. Newspapers were obliged to print "pictures," and to cut down the space reserved for letterpress, in order to meet the public demand for illustrations. It was discovered that women, in particular, preferred "pictures" to verbal statements, and either subscribed to "picture papers" or kept the "picture pages" of more serious journals in their homes. Advertisers were quick to perceive this and to understand, inasmuch as women are the principal buyers of goods for domestic purposes, that papers with illustrations were the most effective media of publicity. Not even the staidest journals could long withstand the joint pressure of women and advertisement agents.

When the public grew accustomed to, and presently came to desire, impressions that could be received through the eye without mental effort, its power of following discussions on public affairs began to wane. As long as the "silent films" prevailed in the cinemas, this atrophy of public intelligence was especially noticeable. A corrective then appeared in the form of "talking films," and yet another corrective in wireless broadcasting which, in its "news" and "talks," appeals directly to the intelligence of listeners. The announcement of news by wireless, and of views in the form of "talks" by acknowledged authorities, began a new phase in the daily education of the public. It is still an open question whether television will not, in its turn, act upon the public mind in the same way as the silent films acted upon it. But television should enable people to see what is actually taking place and to be spectators of real events. Thus it may exercise their powers of direct observation and strengthen rather than weaken their perceptive and reasoning faculties. If so, it will be a gain, both to the public and to the Press.

All these changing conditions of publicity bear upon the future of democratic systems of government, and therefore of the future of the Press. I have said that representative democratic systems are hard to work and harder to keep efficient since they demand a fuller and a loftier sense of citizenship than is required or can be tolerated by dictatorial or absolute systems. But the exercise of responsible citizenship postulates both a critical faculty and sustained attention to public reasoning upon public affairs. Would a public that no longer reads full reports of speeches, leading articles or careful statements of fact, and prefers to "trust its own eyes," be able to exercise responsible citizenship? Is not the impact of events upon individual minds to-day so much swifter and more varied than it was even a generation ago that the result may be bewilderment and loss of hold upon essential principles? I say "may be," not "will be." Human minds are remarkably adaptable. They may acquire the power of more rapid co-ordination in response to the increase in the pace and the variety of the impressions they receive. In this case the forms in which thought is expressed might change without detriment to the thought itself.

One cannot tell. Certain it is that the British public has never quite regained the power of sustained attention which it possessed in pre-War years. During the War, when the public mind underwent long periods of strain, newspaper readers lost patience with any statement or piece of writing that they could not take in at a glance. They were elated one day, downcast the next, half-reassured the day after, and then again hopeful or dejected. A student of the British Press from, say, 1916 to 1922 would be struck by the gradual shortening of newspaper and review articles, and by the substitution of notes or brief paragraphs for the longer disquisitions of earlier years. While this process of abbreviation or compression may have been due in part to the rising cost

of the paper on which newspapers were printed, and to the consequent reduction in the size of newspapers themselves, it was chiefly a result of a weakened power of attention among the reading public. The late Lord Northcliffe, who was gifted with an uncanny sense of the ordinary citizen's state of mind, gave orders in 1917 that no articles in his *Daily Mail* should exceed three hundred words in length, and he set the example by writing a large number of condensed and pithy articles himself. Success in writing them was more than a knack, it was the result of severe condensation, that is to say, of sustained mental effort on the part of their writers. However easy it may be to put pen to paper and to spin out phrases, it is far less easy to put into three hundred words what used to be said in one thousand or more.

To this extent the shortening of newspaper articles was by no means harmful. But in so far as the shortened articles were merely "jerky," they responded to an almost pathological condition of the public mind. Mental "jerks" are not education, and there are no short cuts to soundness of public judgment. Sometimes I wonder whether the establishment of dictatorial systems in various European countries was not, in some degree, due to the readiness of their peoples to accept words of command, or "slogans" loudly shouted, because they had lost the power of sustained attention and felt incapable of thinking things out for themselves. Hence, perhaps, the disjointedness of their ideas. And, whatever its cause or causes, the fact is incontestable that this disjointedness has affected also the people of free countries who have loosened their grasp upon political and social principles which their forefathers would not have allowed to be challenged. In this respect, too, the Press has been a mirror of the public mind. It has, with few exceptions, given currency to illiberal notions, and closed its eyes to the suppression of freedom.

abroad without reflecting that if liberal institutions should be undermined in this country there could no longer be any freedom of the Press or any Press worthy of the name. If there be a relationship of cause and effect between the pace and disjointedness of life to-day and the failure of the Press to insist upon the things that belong to public freedom, modern newspapers may have attained at too heavy a cost the dizzy speed at which they are produced.

Sixty years ago editors and other journalists had time to think. Morning newspapers were turned out in leisurely fashion. The late afternoon, the evening and the greater part of the night were available for the preparation of one edition. Telegrams were comparatively few, telephone messages unknown, and news agencies in their infancy. Circulations were counted by tens or, at most, by twenties where they are now counted by hundreds of thousands. Some papers with a nationwide circulation "went to press" as late as five or six a m. I know of a newspaper office in which editorial writers were requested, in those days, "not to write after 2.45 a m." Their "copy" was then sent to the printing room, set up by hand and corrected and re-corrected in proof. When the last proof had been passed, and the presses had begun to rumble, the editor and his staff went home, often in broad daylight.

These conditions are now radically altered. Morning newspapers have to be planned, at latest, in the early afternoon of the day before they appear. Those with large circulations are obliged to print a first edition for the provinces by nine or ten p m, and those with smaller circulations not later than midnight. More pages have to be filled, though the wherewithal to fill them may not come in before seven or eight p m. Then work that used to be spread over eight or nine hours has to be crammed into two or three. The typewriter supersedes

the pen Reports from outside are often dictated by telephone to typists (who use an abbreviated script), sub-edited, passed on to the printers by pneumatic tube, and set up in type by typesetting machines The work of revision, and of adjustment of "metal" to space, is done at equally high pressure Even at the cost of inaccuracies the paper must "go to press" at a given moment The slightest delay may mean the missing of trains, and the loss of readers who will buy another paper if their "own" paper is not punctual

There is no severer strain in the bringing out of a newspaper under such conditions than that of adjusting "metal," or matter in type, to space "Pressure on space"—which many would-be contributors to newspapers are prone to think an editorial fiction—is a reality and, at times, a terrific reality When the printer in charge informs his editor, an hour or two before "going to press," that the matter set up for such-and-such a page is two or three columns "over," it may not be hard to decide what reports or pieces of descriptive writing shall be left out or cut down But when a carefully-considered leading article or other editorial pronouncement is found to be three or four inches too long, five minutes before the paper "goes to press," the strain of cutting the article to the proper length, without involving a serious break in the argument or the re-setting of type, may be fierce indeed A practised editorial eye, able to "take in" the whole of a column at a glance, is often needed to see just where a passage can be neatly cut, the metal type lifted out, and the remaining type adjusted so as to fit exactly into the steel frame of a page Stout nerves and years of training are not always proof against effort of this intensity, and the men who have made the effort are apt to smile when a leisurely critic writes next day to complain of imperfections in an article which has had thus to be curtailed

Doubtless the quality of editorial writing has suffered

from the pace of the modern Press " The margin of time for the consideration of important news has been narrowed Telephonic transmission is instantaneous—and the chief towns and cities of the world are now linked by telephone The factor of time-distance is almost eliminated Within a few minutes tidings of a significant event may reach almost any part of the civilised globe From one centre the news passes forthwith to other centres and flows into every well-equipped newspaper office The men who handle this stream of news must grasp its meaning rapidly and prepare it for publication with the help of information bearing upon it that has been stored, tabulated and indexed in the "Intelligence Departments" of their papers The speed of modern newspaper production would seem like a nightmare to the journalists of older generations

In these circumstances there may be little time for reflection To postpone comment—and comment may be implied by the form in which news is presented or by the headlines which announce it—is not always wise The public expects comment upon the news of the day, and, on the morrow, the situation may have taken another turn If the comment be "editorial" and given in the form of a leading article, it has to be written or dictated without a moment's delay Thus breathlessness breeds breathlessness until the daily creation of a tolerably coherent journal becomes a daily miracle

If machinery alone could work this miracle the achievement would be remarkable enough The costly and intricate machines which turn out millions of copies of newspapers in a few hours are marvels of ingenuity, but they require for their service human minds which cannot with impunity be less efficient than they And it is here that the pace of newspaper production begins to tell Unless editorial staffs, and especially the more responsible members of those staffs, are men of wide knowledge, swift understanding and mature judgment

they will fail to impart to modern newspapers anything like the educative value which the better newspapers of the past possessed "In a sudden emergency, say nothing, or, if something must be said, write platitudes," seems now to be the watchword of more than one journal Yet prompt, terse comment by keen minds aware of public necessities may be of high public value The kind of journalist who waits for official guidance before making up his own mind or who, having ascertained that this or that official decision will be taken, hastens to recommend it editorially so that his paper may "get credit" for having suggested it, is a very sorry guardian of a nation's conscience Not thus can the Press maintain its power

Where, in truth, does 'the power of the Press' really lie? In what does it consist? Less than twenty years ago I heard a man who had begun his connection with the Press as a foreman printer, and had ended it by entering Parliament after selling for a large sum his shares in a popular newspaper, roundly declare that "the power of the Press" is a myth "When I was in Fleet Street," he went on, "I used to have articles written to say that 'Balfour must go,' or 'Asquith must go,' or 'Grey must go' None of them ever went So I know that the Press is powerless And now I am in Parliament I find that Ministers and politicians live in daily fear of the Press! They can't understand that its 'power' is all moonshine"

This wiseacre had in his time helped to turn "the Press" into an "industry" Financial success led him to think it an industry like any other In this belief he "went into" business of another sort—and burned his fingers So, it would seem, "business" is one thing and "the Press" another A hint of the difference was given in October, 1937, by the Managing Editor of a London journal, who observed that while there is "a

very definite limit to the power of a newspaper, however big its circulation, to impose its opinions on its readers," it is at the same time "a sobering thought that, in these days, the various outpourings of the Press constitute by far the most important reading of the nation" He recognised, in effect, that the Press trades in moral values and owes its power to them, even when it seeks to make profit by exploiting them

This is the point at which the newspaper "industry" still leaves some scope for the idealism with which most journalists take up their work and which many of them, despite drawbacks and disappointments, persistently cling to Limited by mechanical and financial necessities though the field for their individual action may be, the broad fact remains that the huge superstructure of their "industry" rests in the last resort upon their skill and brains The position of working journalists is often anomalous Men with University degrees may be paid less than compositors who merely tap the keyboards of typesetting machines The highest rewards given to editors and to their principal assistants are usually lower than those of business managers and successful canvassers for advertisements Yet, without competent editorial staffs, the managerial and mechanical sides of newspapers would fall to the ground If newspapers could be made without journalists, the "industry" might rejoice They cannot be The journalist proper knows that he is at once the foundation and the motive power of the whole "business"

Some awkward questions nevertheless remain to be asked and answered Does an industrialised Press leave journalists much chance to work as most of them would wish to work? Can they, in serving a public unwilling to heed principles or ideas—as distinguished from the episodic or the pictorial aspects of life—find scope for their idealism? As things are, is not the temptation or,

perhaps, the proprietorial pressure upon them to serve up stuff that will "sell the paper" too strong to be withstood? When the biggest circulations and the largest incomes from advertisements go to journals of small educational value, can journalists decline to follow the line of least resistance? Not all of them are moral heroes, may they not be decent fellows without quarrelling with their bread and butter?

In his *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Mr Humbert Wolfe puts into the mouth of one of his characters these satirical lines —

You cannot hope
to bribe or twist,
thank God! the
British journalist
But, seeing what
the man will do
unbribed, there's
no occasion to

The bite of this satire is undeniable. Many a foreign Government would be prepared to pay large sums for the support it gets *gratis* from incorruptible British journalists. But any man who has worked "on the Press" will be chary of echoing Mr Wolfe's stricture upon "the British journalist." Granted that many popular papers—and some others—"play up" to advertisers, and think rather of amusing than of educating their readers, it is none the less true that most working journalists in this country would gladly take the higher rather than the lower path. Can this be said with the same confidence of the majority of newspaper proprietors? Does not their record in the past thirty or forty years lend some point to the shaft which another of Mr Humbert Wolfe's characters aims at them. Descanting upon the ethics of newspaper production, this character remarks —

"And then consider, John, if we determine
to take this line, at the end of our careers

we might assume hereditary ermine
and hide our heads among a crowd of peers,
saying —

‘ The House of Lords
are waiting for
the newspaper
proprietor

Soap ! Attention !
Listen ! Beer !
“ Glory to the
new-made peer ”

Hark ! the Heralds’
College sings,
as it fakes his
quarterings ’ ”

It may be asked if there is any sound reason why men who make fortunes out of newspapers should not be “ raised to the peerage ” in the same way as wealthy brewers have been raised to what Henry Labouchere used to call “ the beerage ” The best answer is once more to consider whether there is or is not an essential difference between the brewing and selling of beer and the printing and selling of news and views I think there is a difference, and that in this difference resides the distinction between the power of “ the Trade ” and the power of “ the Press ” However estimable may be the public service rendered by brewers who supply “ pure beer ” to the thirsty, and however justly “ the stake in the country ” which they thus acquire may enable them—by means of public munificence or private contributions to party funds—to enter the House of Lords, they do not hold quite the same sort of trusteeship for the health of the public mind as that which is claimed for the Press. Nor can the trusteeship of the Press be faithfully discharged save in freedom from all obligations except the duty to serve the highest public interests And

this freedom is undoubtedly circumscribed when, by accepting "honours," the owners of newspapers place themselves under an obligation to parties or Governments

It is sometimes argued that "honours" grant "recognition" to the Press and acknowledge it as a pillar of the State. This argument is double-edged. Does it not cast a slur upon the Press itself by suggesting that such "recognition" is needed to confer "respectability" upon it? In my view it is an error for working journalists to accept official "honours," and a worse error for newspaper owners to aspire to any rank beyond that of independent trusteeship for the public conscience. This was certainly the view of John Walter II, the ablest proprietor and manager of a newspaper in the nineteenth century. He never thought his place in public life could be enhanced by any knighthood, baronetcy or peerage. And Alfred Harmsworth, journalist of genius though he was, lost freedom and dignity when vanity or social ambition made him wish to become Lord Northcliffe. He set a detestable fashion which lesser men followed. In later years he recognised and admitted his mistake.

Provided that political freedom be preserved, the public itself may in time help to save the freedom of the Press. A new generation is growing up, a generation more widely instructed, by better schools and by wireless broadcasting, than any previous generation has been. It may display a correspondingly greater independence of mind, and thus offer an opening for another journalist of genius to do in a new way what Joseph Moses Levy did for the middle classes with his penny *Daily Telegraph* in the third quarter of last century, and what Alfred Harmsworth did in its closing years with his halfpenny *Daily Mail*.

In the eighteen-nineties Alfred Harmsworth saw that the County Council Schools were beginning to turn out a new class of potential newspaper readers. He under-

stood that this class would eagerly buy a journal cheaper than the penny newspapers of those days, especially if there were not too much "blood and culture" about it. So he launched the *Daily Mail* at a halfpenny. If it was not written "by gentlemen for gentlemen"—as Thackeray's ideal *Pall Mall Gazette* was supposed to be—neither did it quite deserve the gibe that it was written "by office boys for office boys." It was deliberately "popular", and, despite rumours—which Harmsworth carefully abstained from denying—that it was losing money fast, it succeeded from the outset. Before its first number was actually published, several experimental or "dummy" issues were printed. So it took to flight full-fledged, and before any rival venture could be started it was in so strong a position that no competition could hurt it.

In time, of course, Harmsworth's example found imitators. Some of them succeeded in their turn, and the success of the halfpenny Press compelled most of the older penny newspapers to copy its methods and to reduce their price. As Mr J. A. Spender, one of the most eminent and respected of living journalists, wrote some years ago in his *Life, Journalism and Politics*, Harmsworth (or Northcliffe) "was immensely important, however much solemn people might try to blink or evade the fact. He and his imitators influenced the common mind more than all the Education Ministers put together; of all the influences that destroyed the old politics and put the three-decker journalist out of action, his was by far the most powerful." Mr Spender notes, too, that Northcliffe never made the mistake which some of his successors have not avoided—that of looking upon journalism, or the "newspaper industry," primarily as a means of making money. "Though the money rolled in," Mr Spender writes, "he (Northcliffe) was not in the least vulgar about it. He had known the pinch of poverty in his childhood and, with his usual directness, appears to have made up his mind quite early in life that the

obstruction to happiness must be put out of the way for himself and all his family before anything else was done. For the rest, money was to him as it was to Cecil Rhodes, the means to power, and he was entirely without purse-pride in any of the ordinary relations of life. His insight into the popular mind was so unerring as to make him a perfect master of crowd psychology."

The future of the British Press may be determined by the next "perfect master of crowd psychology" who is able to found or to control a newspaper. But the crowd will not be Northcliffe's crowd. The prevailing interests of the young to-day are by no means the same as were those of the youths and maidens to whom the nascent *Daily Mail* appealed. If life has been largely mechanised, the scientific principles which mechanical inventions embody play a growing part in it. Means of communication and of movement are swifter. The impulse is less to read or to hear about things than to do them. Action, sometimes feverish, sometimes aimless, is preferred to thought or contemplation. Social conventions are no longer respected solely because they are traditional. Curiosity, which may imply a desire for knowledge, is strong, and it is not confined to things material. Many a former scientific "certainty" has given place to scientific doubt. The material universe itself is now conceived as immaterial and mysterious. A sense of the wonder of things is more general to-day than it has been for long past, a sense the harder to canalise and to define because it is unaccompanied by awe, because the creeds of the Churches no longer command general acceptance, and because the Churches themselves lack spiritual power. It is almost as though youth to-day were seeking after some not unreasonable faith that shall lift it above and free it from the trammels of mechanisation.

The successful journalist of to-morrow may be the

man or the woman who can apprehend these gropings of the "mass mind," and help to guide them without attempting to lay down the law or to dictate. If the Press would lead, it must first follow. In any case, it must march so nearly abreast of its readers as to seem to be keeping pace with them. To run too far ahead is to lose touch. The ideal journalist of to-morrow would be one who, having mastered the wisdom of the philosophers, ancient and modern, and having assimilated the knowledge of men of science, mechanical engineers and political economists, should hide all these things in his bosom and give as much of them to his millions of readers as he felt they could readily digest. If it is a mistake for the Press to march far ahead of the crowd, not less mistaken is it to imagine that the crowd will follow only those who "play down" to it. The crowd likes to feel that those whom it follows know where to go and how to get there. Above all, the crowd likes its leaders to be proved right by events. It does not easily forgive those who mislead or who fail to guide it at difficult turnings.

Is there no loftier task for the Press than that of leading the crowd, after having followed it far enough to know whither it wishes to go? Would it not be a higher ambition to speak for and to a select few, an aristocracy of mind and heart? Must journalism always minister to a rabble? Is there no intrinsic excellence of thought that will command, directly or indirectly, the allegiance of the multitude?

No. Not if the Press be mainly an industry, not if revenue go chiefly to big circulations, not if the costs of newspaper production remain so high as to call for huge incomes from advertisements, not if the Press is to retain the kind of independence and freedom which only commercial prosperity can bestow. There may, indeed, be high-class or "highbrow" newspapers and other publications of limited appeal which will influence the

public men who influence the masses. A few of these papers may survive if they be edited and managed with true journalistic instinct, and if the quality of their news and views be such as to enable them to withstand in their own sphere the competition of cheaper and more popular sheets. But if they fall into the sin of dullness, if a sense of their own superiority betray them into losing touch with or induce them to ignore the healthy instincts of the public, they will inevitably decline and will either disappear or become the appurtenances of a restricted caste. Their best chance of vigorous survival is daily to prove their superior worth by being better, both as "newspapers" and as "viewspapers," than their popular rivals. Thus they might ennoble the Press.

Mr Bernard Shaw has written some shrewd truths upon journalism. "What people cannot endure," he declares, "is the pompous oracle with nothing to say, the noodle's oration, the twaddler's pulpit platitudes and the ranter's tirade. They prefer snippets because the snippets are usually much better. But let anyone come along who can supply the real thing, and the public cannot have enough of it."

What is "the real thing"? Evidently something that people feel to be vital, something that affects their lives and bears out or extends their experience and knowledge. To "come along with the real thing" is the true business of editors. But, as Mr Bernard Shaw insisted, "capable editors are very rare" because they must have "ability enough and to spare for literature and yet deliberately prefer journalism to literature as an occupation." He went on —

Note also, as to daily papers, that their offices are prisons in which the cleverest editor will soon lose touch with the world, being cut off as he is from political meetings, scientific lectures, concerts and even dinners by the hours during which he has to work. A daily paper should have at least three editors, each having one day on and two days

off At present the papers are 20 years behind the times because the editors are recluses Lighthouse keepers with wireless sets know far more of what is going on in the world

Within limits, this is sound criticism—though the “three editor” idea hardly fits in with Mr Shaw’s earlier statement that “capable editors are very rare” At the same time it is true that in many newspaper offices the theory, and often the practice, of editorship are now fully twenty years behind the times. It is the ambition of most journalists to become editors because the title of editor is still surrounded by the glamour which once attached to the man who was able to lay down the policy of a great journal and to tell its readers what they ought to think. Sixty or seventy years ago, when newspapers might be printed as late as five or six a m, and their editors had time for reflection after dining with statesmen and others who held political power, editorial opinion could and did influence the course of affairs But nowadays the theory that an editor wields supreme authority, and that the final decision rests with him on all matters of moment, may compel him to make up his mind a hundred times in the course of a hurried afternoon or evening, and to make it up quickly In order to make these decisions he must be on the spot Otherwise decisions will have to be taken by assistants who may not have all the threads of policy in their hands or who are uncertain of the editor’s own mind Newspapers cannot now be properly edited after the reading-matter they contain has been set up in type and “pulled” in proof They have to be edited, that is to say, conceived and planned, before the type-setters get to work If not, they lose unity, coherence and grip An editor who wishes really to control his paper can hardly be other than a prisoner

Perceiving this, and wishing to control their papers themselves, some newspaper proprietors have tried to reduce the function of editorship to insignificance and

to treat the nominal editors as figureheads. This is a short-sighted method. Newspaper owners have rarely the time or the skill for the technical work of an editor, nor can they be so constantly on the spot as to ensure the unity of their journal. They may appoint "day editors," "news editors," "foreign editors," "picture editors," and "City editors" who are made responsible for different departments, and leave the editor-in-chief to co-ordinate the work of these assistants as best he may. But if the editor-in-chief attempts merely to overrule them and to play the autocrat he retards the smooth production of his paper and is apt to destroy whatever vitality it might otherwise possess. The speed and complexity of modern journalism have made autocratic editorship an anachronism.

Yet efficient editorship is still essential to a good newspaper. Its function is no longer to impose one man's notions upon a subordinate staff, it is that of leadership in a team of comrades. An editor's work is both to supply ideas to his fellows and to draw out their ideas. He has to determine the policy of his paper, perhaps, after discussion with the proprietors, and then to expound its principles to his chief associates so that all may know and accept it willingly. He takes responsibility for it and "covers" his associates in their application of it. The editorship of a great newspaper has been likened to the command of a battleship in action. So, in many ways, it is. Every man needs to know his duty and to be ready and fit to do it at a moment's notice. A trained eye sees at a glance which newspapers are produced by a well-led team, working to a common policy, and which by a leaderless group of lieutenants with spasmodic interference from editors or proprietors.

How should policy be determined? Is it not dependent upon the facts of a situation and upon changes that may occur? Can there be a worse journalistic mis-

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demeanour than to trim or to suppress news lest it conflict with a pre-conceived policy? It is here that the true virtue of editorship begins. Broadly speaking, an editor should be able to foresee the news, that is to say, the coming of events which will be news. His vision should be world-wide and his mind made up on most of the contingencies that seem likely to arise. If his staff at home and abroad know him to be wideawake and interested in the things that cast their shadows before, they will give him timely warning. So, when their reports of those things reach him, he is ready to deal with them. His readers soon feel whether he is guiding them aright; and however much they may be inclined to question or to resent judgments which they may think hard, or comment that appears to go beyond the facts publicly known, they will give his paper credit for fuller knowledge than they themselves possess if the sequel proves it not to have been mistaken. The essence of policy, in the editorship of newspapers as in the government of States, is foresight based on knowledge.

This is the highest form of flair, or "a nose for news," a gift without which no editor and few journalists can make a lasting mark. What the gift consists of it is hard to say. Intuition may be part of it. Another part may be a keener faculty of observation than that of ordinary mortals. But I have never known any journalist develop this gift in an outstanding degree without constant work and close attention to detail. The very art of news-getting demands sustained interest in a wide variety of subjects. News is rarely to be got by those who merely ask for it. It has to be worked for. A foreign correspondent who relies only upon what he can glean from the journals of the country where he lives, or upon what officials, ambassadors or statesmen have an interest to tell him, may soon be left behind in the race. He needs to study the history, the affairs and the men of that country more closely than they are studied by its own

citizens, so as to be able to give information or well-informed advice to the very people from whom he may expect to get news. He must seek, whenever possible, to co-operate with these people rather than to tap them for "exclusive items," and he must be equal to them in the responsible appreciation of news which may concern them or their countries. Then his news will come to him almost unawares because he has taken pains to understand the circumstances out of which it may arise and has won the confidence of the men who can give it.

In his own way every good journalist is a sort of editor. He collects, examines, sifts and passes judgment upon facts and probabilities. And every good editor is a trustee for the mental and moral welfare of his readers. He will know what information to give and what to withhold, how far public welfare may demand a complete revelation of all ascertainable facts, and how far discretion is the better part of publicity. He has to combine in some degree the faculties of a pioneer, a statesman, a writer, a seer and a business man, and to exercise them all in the light of encyclopædic knowledge either of his own or of others upon whom he can call at a moment's notice.

It is not surprising that individuals thus gifted, and capable at the same time of leading a team of journalists, are rare or that they tend, amid the hurry and racket of modern newspaper production, to become rarer. Still they exist and, given initial aptitude, the practice of journalism helps to bring them forth. Initial aptitude may be simply a passion for the public weal, or a desire to be in the thick of things, or overmastering curiosity to know what is going on and why. Without some passion a newspaper man is no journalist and will never be a true editor. The Frenchman who said that "journalism leads to everything—provided one gets out of it," never had the stuff of a real journalist in him. Not only editors but all journalists proper "deliberately prefer

journalism to literature as an occupation " They prefer it to any other occupation since no other can give them the same swift delight, the same sense of complete—though it may be fleeting—achievement, the same joy in striking a shrewd blow at the right time for a good cause As Kipling put it in his famous poem on "The Press" —

Who once hath stood through the loaded hour
Ere, roaring like the gale,
The Harrild and the Hoe devour
Their league-long paper-bale,
And has lit his pipe in the morning calm
That follows the midnight stress—
He hath sold his heart to the old Black Art
We call the daily Press

Who once hath dealt in the widest game
That all of a man can play,
No later love, no larger fame
Will lure him long away
As the war-horse smelleth the battle afar,
The entered Soul, no less,
He saith "Ha ! Ha !" where the trumpets are
And the thunders of the Press !

It matters naught to a journalist that his triumphs be evanescent, that his task is never ended, that, when the presses begin to hum at midnight, or earlier, and to-morrow's paper is on its way to the mail trains, he has to turn his thoughts to the paper of the day after to-morrow which, once again, will be to him a thing of yesterday before his readers see it With the Time-Spirit, in Goethe's Faust he may exclaim —

" Thus at the roaring loom of time I ply "
and alter the next line to make it say that he weaves for men a pattern of the world's doings

This is the secret of the power of the Press over the

men who make newspapers The most notable journalist of the nineteenth century, Thomas Barnes, the man who, with John Walter II, made *The Times* newspaper, understood it fully He was the first and greatest of its editors By intense devotion to his calling he impressed his personality on every department of his paper Deliberately, he preferred journalism to literature as an occupation As the authors of *The History of 'The Times'* recognise, Barnes was "willing to give himself prodigally to the most exacting task in journalism, ready to forgo making himself a name in the history of Letters in order to place *The Times* at the head of the Press His achievement equals in merit much of the literature of that distinguished generation, but no memoir of him was published Yet as a literary man alone Barnes deserves to be remembered The loss to literature was gain to *The Times* Circumstances called for a man of courage, capacity and determination, a man with a policy" And Barnes was such a man Politicians constantly charged *The Times* during the late 1830's with being violent, offensive and tyrannous *The History of 'The Times'* answers —

Its style was certainly forcible, and it was always deliberate The energy and offensiveness were calculated, the nice use of strong language belonging to the essence of Barnes's notion of journalism To a correspondent who sent him some articles he wrote that they were "good as far as they went, but wanted a little devil in them"

Newspaper writing (Barnes explained) is a thing *suu generis*; it is in literature what brandy is in beverages John Bull, whose understanding is rather sluggish—I speak of the majority of readers—requires a strong stimulus He consumes his beef and cannot digest it without a dram, he dozes composedly over his prejudices which his concert calls opinions, and you must fire ten-pounders at his densely-compacted intellect before you can make it comprehend your meaning or care one farthing for your efforts

He himself was excellent at putting "a little devil" into material which came to him. One of Barnes's supreme gifts was the power of adapting to the public taste articles in themselves of inferior merit; he had the art of infusing into them a spirit and a force which gave them an effect they could not have produced in their original form. For, unlike many writers on the Treasury Press, he was a journalist. As for the leading articles, they had plenty of "devil" in them at that critical period of Parliament. "Ten-pounders" of *The Times* earned the paper the nickname of "The Thunderer."

Here we have the secret of the power of the Press in so far as that power is derived from fearless service of public interest. "Barnes was a journalist." He believed neither in the suppression of unpalatable news, nor in euphemisms when straight, hard language was called for. His paper was perfectly co-ordinated. It was "all of a piece." And in so far as the Press may wish to retain its positive power it will always be compelled to enlist real journalists and to keep at arm's length the self-seekers, the humble servants of the mighty, and the men who imagine that they adorn the Press instead of feeling that their whole lives are well sacrificed to it. An exacting mistress, the Press draws ardent souls and binds them with potent magic.

So it will be while newspapers deserve to endure, and newspapers will deserve to endure as long as the public desire to know what is afoot and to know it as a right, not as a privilege graciously bestowed by Governments, corporations or vested interests of any kind. The Press will endure and deserve to endure as long as it can discharge, in free communities, its function of public criticism and its wardenship of the public conscience. As an industry the Press may be profitable or unprofitable. As a profession it may be noble or ignoble. As an art it may offer scope to the finest brains and characters—and to journalistic harlotry. As a vocation it may be exalted

or contemptible As a ministry it may be the loftiest any layman can enter, or a cloak for depravity But as an opening for those who can take it and are minded to use it without counting the cost to themselves journalism has hardly a peer Kipling wrote well —

The Pope may launch his Interdict,
The Union its decree,
But the bubble is blown and the bubble is pricked
By Us and such as We
Remember the battle and stand aside
While Thrones and Powers confess
That King over all the children of pride
Is the Press—the Press—the Press

To be “King over all the children of pride,” to chasten the haughty and succour the weak, to scorn the bigot and confound the sceptic, to serve truth without fear, to admonish the people and expose the demagogue, to chide the wayward and embolden the faint-hearted—in a word, to provide sound comment upon public life in all its aspects—should be the task of the Press and the source of its power And it is the danger lest it cut itself off from this source by becoming a mere “industry,” by pandering to the public for the sake of the big circulations which bring big revenues, that makes the problem of the Press to-day the central problem of modern democracy

CHAPTER

THE WORTH OF FREEDOM

“ EVERY country has the Press it deserves,” runs a facile truism. Assuming, not granting, its soundness we may ask “ What Press do we deserve ? ”

The answer is not easy. In a Fascist Year Book of the Italian Press an anonymous Italian writer says “ If Great Britain still possesses some journals that are among the best in the world, she possesses others that are undoubtedly the worst in the world or at any rate in Europe ” With this verdict I find little reason to quarrel—except in so far as even our worst journals are not subject to official censorship or control. We cannot have it both ways. The freedom which allows a great provincial organ like the *Manchester Guardian* fearlessly to proclaim truths essential to the health of the body-politic, or which enabled *The Times* in 1852* to teach statesmen a wholesome lesson upon the functions of an upright Press, cannot be so circumscribed as wholly to exclude the bad while fostering the good. But is freedom so great a good in itself that for its sake what is less good should be tolerated? When the present condition and the possible future of the British Press are pondered over, it is this old question of the worth of freedom that is seen to lie at the root of the matter.

Every generation has to solve this question for itself. To no attribute of human life does Goethe’s saying apply more aptly. “ That which thy fathers have bequeathed to thee, earn it anew if thou wouldst possess it ” In

* See Chapter “ The Press and the State ”

my own view, freedom is not absolutely or intrinsically dependent upon material conditions or—despite Karl Marx—upon methods of industrial production. There may indeed, be a subtle connection between the right to own some degree of private property and the enjoyment of active liberty. The suppression of all private property would probably entail so complete a dependence of individuals upon the State that those in control of the State would be unlikely to tolerate actions or opinions unwelcome to them, or to leave room for any save passive and mute dissent from their decrees. And seeing that freedom, for all practical purposes, is the freedom of individual human beings to express themselves by the spoken or the written word, or by action within the framework of laws freely made and accepted, enforced silence is not very different from imprisonment of the mind. The Press, the right of public speech and of public meeting, representative institutions and the other characteristics of democracy, connote freedom because they are agencies for the free expression of thought. Without the right to express dissent there can be no freedom in the political sense. Men's minds rarely dwell upon the fundamentals of life unless those fundamentals are endangered or their existence denied. Perhaps because fundamental liberties are now endangered or their value denied in so large a part of Europe and the world, there has of late been a tendency to think of them and to enquire how it has come about that doctrines which our grandfathers held to be axiomatic, and institutions painfully built up and safeguarded through centuries of struggle, should to-day be challenged or overthrown. In common with many others I, too, have been thinking of these things, and, for what they may be worth, I shall set down the conclusions I have reached. They will be found to have some bearing upon the future of the Press.

It is no accident that in Italy and Germany, where

freedom has disappeared and the Press has become an instrument of domestic and foreign propaganda, the State which it serves should be proclaimed as "an Absolute" Any thoughtful enquiry into the value of liberty leads forthwith to an examination of the rival claims of the Absolute and the Relative, and brings us, soon or late, to conclude that mundane freedom is a constant negation of absolutisms—intellectual, spiritual and political—a perennial experiment in relativity, a ceaseless process of adjusting ideals to circumstances. Now the circumstances upon which our practical freedom depends are the laws, conventions or customs of the community to which we belong. Our freedom is "conditioned"—as the philosophical expression goes—by the existence of the society or community in which we possess and enjoy it. It bears no relation to the hypothetically absolute freedom of Robinson Crusoe on his uninhabited island before the advent of Man Friday—for with the arrival of Man Friday the elements of a community or society began to creep in. So our freedom is social or political, not freedom in the abstract. And in proportion as communities develop beyond the primitive stage in which every man may have ample elbow room and be a law unto himself, the freedom of its members becomes more dependent upon others, less absolute, more qualified by circumstances.

This qualified freedom we might call "objective" inasmuch as it is surrounded by conditions that are outside and independent of our personal likes and dislikes. Yet into it there enters another qualifying condition which may be called "subjective." Restrictions to which we grow accustomed cease to be irksome. We do not feel that they limit our freedom. We find that it may not matter so much to our sense of freedom whether we are under constraint of circumstance, physical or social, as whether that constraint irks us. In other words, the degree of our "objective" freedom may seem

of less moment than our "subjective" feeling that there is no reason why we should revolt against the discipline of laws, customs and institutions. As well, we may think, revolt against the law of gravitation.

We need, however, to be careful before we accept the essentials of freedom as being mainly subjective. Otherwise our surroundings may end by cramping us so completely as to render us incapable of free thought or word or deed. We may lose the power and then the will to withstand interferences with our physical liberty. We may become tolerant of intolerance and allow ourselves to be intimidated by the organised violence which is intolerance in action. So the first of the conclusions I have reached in musing upon the worth of freedom is the seeming paradox that intolerance is the one thing we cannot tolerate if we would remain free. We have, for instance, to tolerate bad journals if we would remain free to have good journals.

This conclusion brings me back to the question of relativity. In germ, toleration raises the practical issue between the absolute and the relative. It admits that there is no one absolute political or social truth. Nay, more. Not only does it accept, it postulates criticism and freedom to criticise. Now freedom to criticise is both the safeguard of personal liberty and the source of progress in knowledge and in action. And it carries with it the main attribute of any free society—the toleration of opinions which many, perhaps most, of its members may think wrong. If they tolerate them while thinking them wrong, if they refrain from using violence to suppress them, if they seek to overcome them by argument and persuasion, they recognise that human minds may honestly differ and that it is safer for all opinions to be measured one against the other than that one of them should be imposed by force or constraint. Political freedom does not consist in like-mindedness. It consists, negatively, in agreement to differ and,

positively, in the recognition that differences of view within a community make life richer than uniformity. A society is free when its customs and laws leave scope for individual thought and personal action, and restricts only those aspects of freedom which, were they unrestricted, would prevent others from enjoying freedom. An individual in a free society is not free because its laws and customs are those which he might prefer, but because he has as much say in public or social affairs as any one man can have if all are to have their say and yet live and act together.

It is sometimes claimed that societies ruled by an authority which is able to enforce its will are stronger than a society in which differences of opinion may impede united action. This claim assumes that toleration is a sign of weakness and intolerance an attribute of strength. I think this claim ill-founded. If there were only one political truth, one incontrovertible doctrine, the claim might perhaps be valid. But inasmuch as there is no absolute political truth, and no such thing as infallible human judgment, the attempt to override differences of outlook and to enthrone one fallible judgment as beyond criticism or cavil is inherently weaker than the admission that, while all political truths are relative, certain relative truths may, by the common consent of free minds, be accepted as the soundest working rules in human affairs. The weak are those who allow their individual judgments to be overridden or who seek to escape from the perplexities of human existence by taking refuge in some absolute doctrine or theory of which the acceptance saves them from the worries and uncertainties of critical citizenship. The test of political systems lies in the type of citizen which they foster or produce. Systems that bar diversity of opinion and suppress criticism tend to produce a uniform type of citizen and to standardise human minds and cramp human conduct. The case for criticism is that civilisa-

tion cannot progress without it. There must be impunity for criticism if society is to be saved from stagnation.

Yet here an important distinction needs to be drawn between freedom of criticism and freedom of conduct. As Mr. Bernard Shaw has shrewdly observed (in his Preface to *On the Rocks*), the critic cannot be allowed to change his social conduct until his criticism has changed the law. He adds: "We are so dangerously uneducated in citizenship that most of us assume that we have an unlimited right to change our conduct the moment we have changed our minds." The difficulty, which can only be overcome by education in free citizenship, is to distinguish between the critic and the social criminal or lunatic, between liberty of precept and license of social behaviour.

Now if criticism is to be fruitful, not merely destructive of institutions and customs that may have grown up in circumstances other than those prevailing at a given moment, there must be freedom to make enquiry, to know, to speak and to write. It must be possible to "air" opinions and to verify the accuracy of the facts upon which they are alleged to be based. Without substantial freedom of the Press—which includes freedom of literature—this cannot be, as German Nazi writers have frankly recognised. Hitler himself lays down the doctrine in his book *Mein Kampf* that the aim of the State must be to form "a community of living beings who are physically and mentally alike." Dr. Dietrich, the official head of the Nazi Press, has claimed that the "mass thought" of the community, not individual thought, must be the source of all knowledge, including scientific knowledge. And a Nazi University professor, Dr. Otto Koellreutter, deliberately puts "folk-thought" high above individual thought.

Fantastic though these claims may seem to people nurtured in freedom, they are logical and consistent developments of the totalitarian outlook. In countries

where freedom is suppressed, neither the deepest philosophical thought nor accurate historical analysis could be tolerated lest the notions prescribed by the State and by its Leader be upset. Communist Russia cannot tolerate free discussion upon matters like the ownership of property. Nazi Germany cannot allow the dogmas of blood and race to be called in question. Fascist Italy cannot brook free enquiry into the nature and functions of the State or into the position of individuals in regard to the State. It has silenced so eminent a philosopher as Benedetto Croce, whose doctrine of the State and of political life hardly strikes me as revolutionary. In his little work "Orientamenti" he says —

To love the State is to work with the State, to put into the State and to pour into political life what is best in us, our feelings, the truths we think, that is, our active faith, our ideals, and it is this participation which, in other words, is called freedom. This freedom is not opposition to the State, an offence to its majesty, but is the very life of the State itself—unless we are ready to suppose that the blood circulating and renewing itself continually in our veins is lawless agitation against the sovereign calm of our physiological organism. Nor is freedom conceivable in the State unless it be political freedom to co-operate with its life.

True, the Italian philosopher sins against the light of Fascism in not conceiving the State as "an Absolute." Rather does he conceive the State as the executive organ of a community and as the sum-total of the functions which the community delegates to its executive organ for the preservation and furtherance of its own welfare. And this concept is not far from that of John Stuart Mill who, in his famous essay "On Liberty," laid his finger upon some of the positive aspects of freedom. After showing that if anyone does an act hurtful to others there is a *prima facie* case for punishing him by law or, where legal penalties are not safely applicable, by general disapprobation, Mill went on —

There are also many positive acts for the benefit of others which he may rightfully be compelled to perform, such as to give evidence in a court of justice, to bear his fair share in the common defence or in any other joint work necessary to the interest of the society of which he enjoys the protection, and to perform certain acts of individual beneficence such as saving a fellow-creature's life, or in interposing to protect the defenceless against ill-usage, things which, whenever it is obviously a man's duty to do them, he may be rightfully made responsible to society for not doing. A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury.

This sound doctrine applies with especial force to the freedom of the Press. In free countries the Press fails in its proper task if it glosses over or shrinks from exposing abuses or practices harmful to the general welfare. It is the duty of the Press to speak out. Its allegiance is to the public, not to any constituted authority, for the only check upon abuses of authority is public knowledge of how authority is being exercised. By insisting that men—and, *a fortiori*, newspapers—are answerable not only for what they do but for the consequence of failing to do what they ought, Mill, the liberal philosopher, was not far from the well-known passage in the Anglican confession which runs: "We have done that which we ought not to have done, and have left undone that which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." In other words, sins of omission may be as subversive of freedom as sins of commission.

If the practise and the defence of freedom require spontaneous, active citizenship it is none the less true that we need to review and revise our ideas upon what constitutes freedom in the light of changing circumstances. A century ago an income-tax which now takes more than a quarter of a citizen's revenue, and a

succession duty which may confiscate one-half of his estate, would have been denounced as unwarrantable inroads upon the rights of private property and of personal freedom. To-day they are tolerated or accepted as matters of course. Less than a century ago there was much talk of the right of employers to buy "free labour" in a "free market," and workmen who could earn good wages by the sale of their labour thought themselves free. The history of the Trade Union movement in this country is that of attempts to improve "this freedom" by collective bargaining, despite the fact that Trade Union discipline deprived individual wage-earners of freedom to sell their labour at whatever price it would fetch. Factory legislation—which has undoubtedly interfered with and curtailed the freedom of employers—is now thought essential to secure the freedom of industrial workers from unfair exploitation, and there is some reason to think that reforms will one day be needed to prevent freedom in the ownership, if not in the use, of "labour-saving" machinery from condemning willing hands to another kind of economic slavery—compulsory idleness for lack of employment.

So conceptions of freedom, economic and political, are obviously relative, that is to say, they depend upon circumstances. In my view the right relationship between economic and political freedom at given moments and under given conditions is a matter for reflection and enquiry, not for economic or political dogmatism. The dogmatism of the "Manchester" School of economic thought, on the one hand, and that of Marxism, on the other, has been responsible, directly and indirectly, for the eclipse of the liberal philosophy which sustained the doctrine of freedom in the nineteenth century. And if the dogmatists of Socialism to-day stand aghast at totalitarian reactions against the enforcement of Marxist dogma in Russia, they would do well to enquire how far Marxist and Socialist contempt for the

principles of political freedom may help to account for the very evils which they deplore. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the doctrine of the "class-struggle" are as incompatible with any sound philosophy of human freedom as are the doctrines of Fascism and Nazism. The very idea of dictatorship is a denial of freedom, and there is no sounder warrant for a dictatorship in the name of proletarians or "have-nots" than there is for dictatorships on behalf of other sections of a community that may have something to lose and be loth to lose it. Few passages in Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, show keener discernment than those in which he describes the fear of the lower middle-class lest it be thrust back into the ranks of proletarian wage-earners from which it has managed to escape, and Hitler's shrewdness in perceiving that his "National Socialist" movement would appeal with especial force to the lower middle-class in Germany was certainly not inferior to that of Marx and the Marxian Socialists who based their plans for successful revolutionary violence on the belief that if the proletarians of the world would unite as an irresistible mass they could break their chains. Fascism and Nazism have installed tyranny by pretending to defend property. With his wonted aptness of phrase, Don Salvador de Madariaga has put the thing in a nutshell: "Fascism is but the image of Communism on the waters of fear."

As I have sought to show, it is no accident that these various dictatorships should be at one in destroying the freedom of the Press. Men who have not the sense of freedom in them cannot brook a free Press. On the other hand, a mumbling of the shibboleths of "democracy" is no substitute for faith in freedom. Indeed, the poverty of political thought among "advanced" parties in countries that are still free is one of the most depressing intellectual phenomena of our time. So long as they speak and behave as though

they were convinced that men live by bread alone, that "economics" provide the master-key which can open every door to political wisdom, the language of freedom will never be their mother tongue nor will they speak it with the inspired accents of the great leaders who knew the worth of liberty in and for itself. They may even find that the despised bourgeoisie, the rapacious capitalist and industrial class, have retained enough enlightenment to understand that the true choice of free communities does not lie between the "ideologies" of totalitarian Communism, on the "Left," and of Fascism and Nazism, on the "Right," but must be fixed upon the ideology of ordered freedom which has been the greatest contribution of English thought and experience to the civilisation of the human race.

We need to go more closely into this matter if only because it governs, in the last resort, any possibility of freedom for the Press. We must ask why the present threat to freedom has grown so formidable, why great peoples like the Italians and the Germans have lost their liberty, why they seem to glory in systems of repression. Why have we seen prominent British public men, including owners of influential newspapers, bow before the Leaders of those systems and, overlooking the foul crimes for which those Leaders have been responsible, hearken to their words and extol their deeds?

The answer is that when one dictatorial system, like Russian Communism, establishes itself by violence and, with the help of an omnipresent and ruthless police, crushes both personal and political freedom and abolishes the private ownership of property, other systems which profess to protect private property develop in opposition to the first and, also by violence and secret police, destroy not only the men and the parties that favour Communism but the supporters of freedom and repre-

sentative democracy as well. If ordinary folk, from people with savings-banks accounts or little cottages to the well-to-do or the wealthy, think their possessions are in danger, and are bidden to choose between systems of which the one suppresses freedom and property while the other appears to suppress only freedom, they are tempted to prefer the loss of liberty in the hope of preserving their property. This temptation seems to me the essence of the present threat to freedom, including freedom of the Press, and the threat is the more insidious because, once the choice has been made, those who have made it may find, too late, that they have thrown away their freedom to possess, no less than their freedom to think, to act and to speak.

The defects of what is vaguely called the "capitalist system" may or may not outweigh its merits. But in countries which retain representative democratic systems and their adjunct, the freedom of the Press, "capitalism" has still the virtue of leaving its critics free to criticise it. And by public criticism the abuses of capitalism can be mitigated or put right. As I have said, it is freedom to criticise that is essential to liberty in civilised communities, or, as a distinguished British civil servant put it, not long ago, it is "the right to tell the Government to go to Hell." Without it there can be no guarantee of personal freedom and no certainty of progress, no protection against the arbitrary whims of fallible dictators and no effective exercise of private judgment. A free community, with freedom to express opinion through its newspapers, on public platforms, and in Parliament through elected representatives, can change its rulers and its laws without disaster when it feels that public welfare demands a change, whereas in totalitarian countries change cannot be wrought without upheaval or violence. For a time, and under stress of emergency, a dictatorship may be more efficient than a democracy. It does not follow that democracies,

instructed in public affairs by their public men and by a vigilant, outspoken Press, need always be less efficient than dictatorships. And it remains broadly true that the margin of inefficiency in democracies, the time-lag between their recognition of what should be done and the doing of it, is in the nature of an insurance premium against disaster when change is needed. Even in matters of life and death, such as war, it has yet to be proved that free democracies are inferior as political systems to communities which obey commands from above. It was not the democracies that were worsted in the Great War, however egregiously lack of insight and leadership among them may since have brought them to the verge of losing the peace and may have imperilled their very existence.

To my mind the whole problem of the worth of freedom can now be put into three questions. Is a free personality more valuable as an element in human life than a personality moulded and shaped by the dictates of a supreme leader at the head and controlling the resources of an omnipotent totalitarian State? Are free individual wills more likely to advance human welfare than wills so disciplined and directed from the cradle up that they automatically obey a word of command? Is there no peril to mankind, no danger to the progress of knowledge, no threat to everything we understand by "civilisation," in the creation of vast communities of like-minded beings who will stampede as a herd at the behest of one man?

It is the old issue whether the individual mind, thinking and concluding freely, is worth more as an asset to humanity than the mass mind or what Hitler calls "herd-unity." He attributes the unanimity of the British peoples in the Great War to the superior quality of their "head-unity" as against the dispersive tendencies of German minds. But he seems not to have understood that our "herd-unity" was the willing

co-operation of members of free communities in an hour of danger to their own freedom, or that, in the presence of this danger, they deliberately waived many a hard-won right with a spontaneous spirit of self-devotion that only a community of individuals, long expert in freedom and wont to bear its responsibilities, could have displayed. So he took up the idea of like-minded herd-instinct, to be enforced by constraint and propaganda upon a German folk-community, as a substitute, an *Ersatz*, for the undictated cohesion of a free people. In its political and military aspects this idea was not alien to the temperament of the German people which takes readily to discipline and likes to move in orderly mass-formations. What is comparatively new in Hitler's application of it is the obliteration of that freedom of thought and enquiry, of research and criticism, which had marked the progress of German philosophy and science in the past.

Human progress, as I understand it, has not been brought about by "mass-thought" or "likemindedness". Such steps as men have taken from barbarism even to their present low level of enlightenment have been prompted by great individual minds. The worth of freedom is that it gives a chance to individual minds to wrestle with error and ignorance, to seek what is true and to proclaim it, and, no matter at what risk, to bear witness to the truth they have found. It is an opportunity for personal enterprise and endeavour, and, politically and socially, an opening for public service. It is the antithesis of dictatorial constraint.

How far do the men who control the British Press to-day understand the worth of this freedom? In what degree do the readers of their newspapers realise all that "the freedom of the Press" implies? How far have ignorance of and indifference to these matters tended to lower journalistic standards until the public gets only the

sort of Press it may be said to deserve? Reassuring answers to these questions might more easily be given if there were proof that the majority, or even a conspicuous minority, of British journals were controlled and written by men who, having weighed the worth of freedom, know that of all human possessions it is the most precious. This is a time when the surface gloss on the garment of our "democratic" civilisation is wearing off, when the strands of the tissue below are being revealed. For the British Press in particular, and for the men who control it, the hour has come to examine those strands, to see whether they were truly woven in years gone by, and whether, in such weaving as is now being done, stout yarn or thread of shoddy is being used. Free institutions, the political form of individual liberty, may soon be on trial for their life. The late Earl of Balfour called them "the life-blood" of the British Commonwealth. Among them none, not even Parliament, is of higher import than a free press, a Press as free from commercial, industrial or financial tutelage as from subservience to political authority. There may still be time for our journals and their owners to bethink themselves, to remember the conditions of their own existence in freedom, and to prove by faithful observance of those conditions that they have found the right solution of "the central problem of modern democracy."

CHAPTER II

THE PRESS AND THE STATE

A FEW months after Hitler came into power in Germany a German journalist asked my advice upon a matter of painful urgency. I knew him to be a man of upright character and unblemished record. For many years he had served with distinction a German journal widely respected for its independence of outlook, and he had just been warned that his position and, probably, his livelihood would depend upon his willingness to sign a declaration which would "co-ordinate" him with the National Socialist, or Nazi, Party whose views he did not share. Should he sign, his self-respect would be gone. Should he refuse to sign, he might have only his self-respect to live upon. What ought he to do?

Rarely have I found it harder to give advice. Could I have said to him "Do not sign and I will see that you come to no harm" it would have been easy. But to tell a man to be a hero at his own risk without being able to offer him lasting support would be cheap heroics on my part. I felt that my own "case of conscience" was scarcely less painful than his.

Perhaps from lack of moral courage I declined to advise him. I asked him instead to tell me his own feelings, and discussed with him all the pros and cons of acceptance or refusal. When I saw that he was inclined not to sign the declaration and to take his life in his hands, I even played "Devil's advocate" to the extent of suggesting that if all the men of upright character were weeded out of the German Press their

opportunities of rendering service to the German people at some future date might be lost. In fact, I tempted him to trifle with his conscience so that my own moral responsibility for the consequences of his refusal to sign the declaration might be lessened. My underlying purpose, I suppose, was to save him from taking, in a moment of righteous indignation, a decision he might afterwards regret.

He took the decision, refused to sign the declaration, lost his position and his livelihood, and has since been a wanderer on the face of the earth, living precariously upon what little he can earn. Though I met him again, not long ago, in a foreign country where he was still seeking regular employment, he gave me no hint that he had ever doubted the rightness of the step he took. May some future day bring him his just reward !

Meanwhile his example, and that of others no less heroic, makes the behaviour of the non-Nazi German journalists who accepted "co-ordination" look a trifle shabby. Have they not become inglorious cogs in a Press and propagandist machine which is an integral part of the Nazi Totalitarian State ? Do they not write to order, with such talent as they may possess, whatever Dr Goebbels or the Secret State Police commands them to write ? Have they not been put into uniform, or livery, to symbolise their servility ? Are they still journalists or have they become scribbling lackeys ? The answer may depend upon the further questions whether a Press that is not free is a "Press" at all, and whether there can be any room in a totalitarian State for journalism as free countries understand it.

The German "Press" is an instrument of government. It is playing the part assigned to it in the Nazi scheme of things, and those who care for the freedom of the British Press, as an aspect of British political freedom in general, should understand what this part is and its relation to the Nazi system.

In a German work entitled *Die Zeitungspolitische Aufgabe* (The Political Task of the Press), Herr Wilhelm Waldkirch defines with admirable clearness the Nazi view of the function of newspapers. He says that the political task of the Press can only be conceived as the unconditional recognition of Leadership in the State and the furtherance by newspapers of the Leader's plans without restriction or reservation. The wide significance of this task, he argues, needs to be grasped so that all the energies of the German Press may be brought to bear in the successful re-fashioning of political life. What German newspapers do or fail to do may influence decisively the further development of the German State. Hence the importance of recognising and understanding what the political task of newspapers is.

Happily, Herr Waldkirch goes on, harmful divergence and variety of political purpose in Germany have now been totally removed from public life, and likewise the journalism which served party ends and never cared for the inner worth of the German "folk-character." In no event can a newspaper now be permitted to have a policy of its own or to express views and opinions calculated to impede the Leadership of the State. In earlier days there was far too much criticism, and critics may have believed that they were serving the general interest. But even then earnest observers saw that such ideas were false and must lead to error. To-day it is more widely understood that a new era demands new ideas. The Government means to keep the Leadership of the State firmly in its own hands, and the newspapers must comprehend this necessity and support in every way the plans of the Government.

Herr Waldkirch drives home his point by various quotations from the Leader's own speeches, which insist that a revolution can only succeed if it stamps its spirit upon a whole people, that the new Nazi State must

THE PRESS AND THE STATE

fashion new men, and that it is the mission of the Press to put the right stamp upon them Or, in Hitler's words. "A newspaper is the means of popular self-education"—in the ideas of the Leader who controls the State. Dr Goebbels, whom Herr Waldkirch quotes with approval, expresses the same view in his declaration that the privilege of writing is bound up with the obligation to serve the State

From these and many other corroborative statements it is plain that the whole conception of the freedom of the Press, and of individual freedom itself, has been eliminated from the German political outlook. A German newspaper can no longer be an organ of "public opinion" It must be a means of impressing upon the public what the Leader of the State decides that the public should think Some mental effort may be needed in Great Britain, and in other countries where the Press is still comparatively free, to grasp the full meaning of this revolution, and to understand that the power of an enslaved and "co-ordinated" Press may lie even more in what it does not say or dare not publish than in what it publishes or affirms Assertion uncorroborated by statements of fact, or by arguments based upon them, may engender doubt But the suppression of facts upon which individual minds might place their own interpretations is a more insidious and potent method of preventing the growth of critical opinion In this way the process of compulsory "co-ordination" to which German newspapers have been subjected since 1933 is extended by them to the whole people through the suppression of facts as much as through the positive inculcation of the Leader's commands upon their readers.

In dealing with Germany—as, indeed, with other totalitarian countries—the statesmen and journalists of free countries have therefore to reckon with an unprecedented state of international affairs The very dimen-

sions of political and intellectual intercourse between nations have been altered. There can be no interplay of public opinion between totalitarian countries and countries in which opinion is still free, no appeal from the policy of a totalitarian Government to the judgment of its people. On the other hand there can be and, as recent experience has shown, there often is, an appeal by the newspapers and other propagandist agencies of totalitarian States to the public opinion of free countries, sometimes against the policy and the interests of those countries. But there is no reciprocity, no give and take, no possibility of persuasion and agreement by argument and counter-argument, for in totalitarian States the Government alone is articulate, and the people are deliberately kept in ignorance of everything that might militate against its acceptance of a Leader's policy. In comparison with Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Soviet Russia, even Tsarist Russia was a home of freedom. Neither the Tsarist censorship of the Press nor a powerful bureaucracy nor a secret police ever quite succeeded in muzzling the great newspapers. This totalitarian imposition of State-manufactured opinion upon whole peoples is something new, revolutionary and sinister in the modern world.

As for Italy, a glance at the *Annuario della Stampa Italiana* (Year Book of the Italian Press) with its more than 1,000 pages, suffices to reveal the disciplined servitude to which the Fascist Press has been reduced. Before the advent of Fascism the greater Italian journals like the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan, and the *Stampa* of Turin—to mention only these—challenged comparison with the best newspapers in Europe, while for brilliance and vivacity of writing Italian journalists were second to none. To-day they are compulsorily ranged in "syndicates" and corporations and cannot exercise their profession unless their names are registered in a Pro-

fessional Album as proof of their Fascist orthodoxy. "Royal" decrees of infinite complexity regulate their positions and make of them functionaries of the single party which rules the State. Italian journalists have been made to learn the cost of insubordination. They have seen the noblest and most upright among them beaten to death by Fascist cudgels, as Giovanni Amendola was, or condemned to long terms of penal servitude, or sent to concentration camps or, in milder cases, placed under police supervision. Even those who succeeded in escaping from Italy, like the late Carlo Rosselli, have found that they were not beyond the reach of the assassin's dagger.

So there is point in the chapter entitled "Spirit and Formation of Fascist Journalism" (with a sub-title "The Era of Mussolini") in the Year Book of the Italian Press from which I quote the following passages —

When Fascism came and the journals of the most acrid opposition were suppressed, while dissentient journals were converted—the latter representing an intellectual tradition that had to be respected at least as far as their titles were concerned—the public felt for some time a sense of bewilderment which it would not be honest to deny. "What?" people said, "The Government no longer makes a mistake? The State is always right?"—for the broad public mixes up "Government" and "State," and to-day Government and State are identical.

And it must honestly be admitted, since the Duce himself has said it, that spiritual adaptation was difficult.

But to-day, the Year Book goes on, who can say whether newspapers form opinion or whether opinion forms newspapers? And it adds:—

In the radical transformation of modern civilisation, which has renewed the aspect and the function of public and private institutions among great European peoples, like the Italian and the German, journalism partly preceded and partly followed the revolutionary process. In these coun-

tries the daily Press distinguishes itself clearly from the Press of the rest of the world

What is it that distinguishes the Press of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy from the Press of the rest of the world? The Year Book explains the difference by saying that "Fascism, first-born among the movements of renewal in Europe, was a great crusade for the liberation of the Italian spirit. Was it a return to the primitive? Yes, but this is exactly the starting point of efficient revolution which restores to the people, on the morrow of historical cataclysms, a kind of virginal quality." Fascist journalism, the Year Book claims, has renewed the youth of the Italian people, and places before it, by careful selection, facts of historical value, not merely chaotic news. Still it cannot be said that under the Fascist system the Press has yet completed its evolution. The system has put the Press in the front line and allows it a noble initiative. The obedience to the State-idea which is required of Italian journalists is therefore not the obedience of well-fed lackeys but that of faithful soldiers; and this idea of the State is defined in the 8th volume of the *Writings and Speeches of Benito Mussolini*, which says "The apex of the Fascist doctrine is the concept of the State, of its essence, of its tasks, of its aims. For Fascism the State is an Absolute in regard to which individuals and groups are relative. Individuals and groups are 'thinkable' only in so far as they are within the State. A liberal State does not direct the play and the material and spiritual development of the community but merely registers the results, whereas the Fascist State has its own comprehension of these things, its own will, and for this reason it is called 'ethical'."

Here we have, frankly put, the fundamental distinction between the function of the Press in a totalitarian State and its functions in countries where individual freedom is still looked upon as a good in itself. "For Fascism the

State is an Absolute" If this doctrine were of Italian origin it might be taken as an interesting contribution by an Italian mind to the practical treatment of one of the major problems of social and political organisation But it is not Italian, it is German Whatever coherence the political thought of Mussolini may possess is derived, at one or two removes, from the German philosopher Hegel, whose view of the State, and of the Prussian State in particular, was laid down in uncompromising terms more than a century ago It was from Hegel that Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx derived not a few of the notions which inspired their conception of the Communist State, and from Marx and Engels the French apostle of syndicalism, Georges Sorel, first took his doctrine of syndicalist violence as a means of social and political transformation before he retraced it to its fountain head in Hegel and drank deep at that poisoned spring Mussolini, in his turn, took the noxious doctrine from Sorel Now Hegel declared in his *Philosophy of History* that the State is a working model of the Absolute, an embodiment of the "Idea," that is to say, of the Reality behind phenomena The conscious beings who live under the shadow of this model of the Absolute have, in Hegel's eyes, just as much or as little title to independent consideration as the cells of the human body "The State," Hegel says, "is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth", for "all the worth which the human being possesses, all spiritual reality, he possesses only through the State" And again "The State is an end in itself. It is the ultimate end which has the highest right against the individual, whose highest duty is to be a member of the State"

This teaching is an antithesis of the liberal and, indeed, of the Christian outlook upon life, for both assign superior value to the human personality, which the liberal outlook considers the primary and indispensable element in a community of free and responsible human beings, while the Christian doctrine looks upon

it as the repository of an immortal soul. Of social and political freedom a free Press is at once the expression and the guardian, but under a political system which treats the individual as subject in all things to the will of an Absolute State, expressed by the dictates of an absolute Leader, a free Press and free journalism can have no warrant or justification.

Nor does the matter end here. It reaches down to the very foundations of the philosophy of freedom. In free countries it is not and cannot be the business even of what are sometimes called "responsible" journalists merely to echo the views of a Government or to observe the reticence which statesmen impose upon themselves or believe to be due to the positions they hold. If support be given by independent journals to statesmen in office it should be given voluntarily and with an individual conviction that those statesmen are to the best of their ability serving the welfare of the community.

A classical definition of the difference between the duties of a free Press and the duties of statesmen is to be found in the two famous leading articles which Robert Lowe (afterwards Lord Sherbrooke) wrote for *The Times* under Delane's editorship on February 6 and 7, 1852. In December, 1851, Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic, had carried out the *coup d'état* which was to make him Emperor of the French, and Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary in Lord John Russell's Administration, expressed on behalf of Great Britain his approval of the accomplished fact without consulting his colleagues or informing the Queen. *The Times* thundered against him and Louis Napoleon "So irritated and annoyed" was Louis Napoleon by the language of *The Times* that British Ministers who thought it desirable to stand well with him had to try to stop its mouth. Meanwhile Palmerston's high-handed

acceptance of the French *coup d'état* brought about his dismissal. The Queen protested energetically against his behaviour, the Prime Minister declined to accept Palmerston's explanations, and Lord Granville was appointed to the Foreign Office in Palmerston's stead. Some two months later the whole Russell Administration fell. Meanwhile Lord Derby, who was to succeed Lord John Russell as Prime Minister, took occasion (in a debate on the Address in reply to a Speech from the Throne) to lecture *The Times* for its outspoken language and to claim that "as in these days the English Press aspires to share the influence of statesmen, so also must it share in the responsibilities of statesmen."

As an independent journalist Delane felt he could not let this doctrine pass unchallenged. He instructed Robert Lowe to refute it and to expound the principles that govern both the freedom of the Press and the duty of journalists in a free community. Lowe did this with insight and vigour. Taking up Lord Derby's proposition that a Press which aspires to share the influence of statesmen must also share in the responsibilities of statesmen, he wrote in *The Times* of February 6, 1852 —

If the first of these propositions be established, the second follows as a matter of course, and we, of all men, are the least disposed to lower the proper functions or to deny the responsibilities and the power we may derive from the confidence of the public. But, be that power more or less, we cannot admit that its purpose is to share the labours of statesmanship, or that it is bound by the same limitations, the same duties, the same liabilities as that of the Ministers of the Crown. The purposes and duties of the two powers are constantly separate, generally independent, sometimes diametrically opposite. The dignity and the freedom of the Press are trammelled from the moment it accepts an ancillary position. To perform its duties with entire independence, and consequently with the utmost public advantage, the Press can enter into no close or binding alliances with the statesmen of the day, nor can it surrender

its permanent interests to the convenience of the ephemeral power of any Government

The first duty of the Press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation. The statesman collects his information secretly and by secret means, he keeps back even the current intelligence of the day with ludicrous precautions, until diplomacy is beaten in the race with publicity. The Press lives by disclosures, whatever passes into its keeping becomes a part of the knowledge and the history of our times, it is daily and forever appealing to the enlightened force of public opinion—anticipating if possible the march of events—standing upon the breach between the present and the future, and extending its survey to the horizon of the world. The statesman's duty is precisely the reverse. He cautiously guards from the public eye the information by which his actions and opinions are regulated, he reserves his judgment of passing events till the latest moment, and then he records it in obscure or conventional language, he strictly confines himself, if he be wise, to the practical interests of his own country, or to those turning immediately upon it, he hazards no rash surmises as to the future, and he concentrates in his own transactions all that power which the Press seeks to diffuse over the world. The duty of the one is to speak, of the other to be silent. The one explains itself in discussion, the other tends to action. The one deals mainly with rights and interests, the other with opinions and sentiments, the former is necessarily reserved, the latter essentially free.

It follows, therefore, from this contrast that the responsibilities of the two powers are as much at variance as their duties. For us, with whom publicity and truth are the air and light of existence, there can be no greater disgrace than to recoil from the frank and accurate disclosure of facts as they are. We are bound to tell the truth as we find it, without fear of consequences—to lend no convenient shelter to acts of injustice and oppression, but to consign them at once to the judgment of the world. If the public writer shares in any degree the influence of the

statesman, he shares at least few of those personal objects which constitute so large a part of ordinary statesmanship.

Even the triumph of his opinions is not accompanied by the applause of a party or the success of a struggle for patronage and power. Those opinions which he has defined, and, so to speak, created, slip from him in the moment of their triumph, and take their stand among established truths. The responsibility he really shares is more nearly akin to that of the economist or the lawyer whose province is not to frame a system of convenient application to the exigencies of the day but to investigate truth and to apply it on fixed principles to the affairs of the world.

The responsibility we acknowledge has therefore little in common with that of statesmen, for it is estimated by a totally different standard of rectitude and duty. The Press owes its first duty to the national interests which it represents, but nothing is indifferent to it which affects the cause of civilisation throughout the world. The Press of England, standing as it now does, alone in the enjoyment of entire freedom, would grievously neglect its exalted privileges if it failed to recollect how much is due to the common interest of Europe. It may suit the purposes of statesmen to veil the statue of Liberty, and to mutter some formulary of disingenuous acquiescence in foreign wrongs, dictated by their fears rather than by their convictions, but we prefer to await for our justification the day when the entombed and oppressed liberties of Europe shall once more start into life and array themselves under the standard to which we cling. For to what, after all, are the statesmen of England to look for strength and national power, if injuries and offences rise against us, but to the enlightened resolution of the people of England to uphold the principles on which our own polity and independence are founded?

It would not be amiss if the Press and the statesmen of England should to-day reflect upon the final question which *The Times* so firmly asked some 86 years ago. Many things in Europe and the world might not have gone so sorely awry during the past decade if the leading journals of the British Press had consistently observed

the principles which *The Times* then laid down And having enunciated these principles in one leading article *The Times* went on next day to work them out and to apply them to the situation which Louis Napoleon had created in France (*Mutatis mutandis* more than one passage in its reasoning is applicable at this moment to the peoples of Italy and Germany)

On February 7, 1852, *The Times* therefore wrote as follows —

The ends which a really patriotic and enlightened journal should have in view are, we conceive, absolutely identical with the ends of an enlightened and patriotic Minister, but the means by which the journal and the Minister work out these ends, and the conditions under which they work, are essentially and widely different The statesman in opposition must speak as one prepared to take office, the statesman in office must speak as one prepared to act A pledge or a despatch with them is something more than an argument or an essay—it is a measure Undertaking not so much the investigation of political problems as the conduct of political affairs, they are necessarily not so much seekers after truth as expediency The Press, on the other hand, has no practical function, it works out the ends it has in view by argument and discussion alone, and, being perfectly unconnected with administrative or executive duties, may and must roam at free will over topics which men of political action dare not touch Government must treat other Governments with external respect, however black their origin or foul their deeds, but happily the Press is under no such trammels, and, while diplomatists are exchanging courtesies, can unmask the mean heart that beats beneath a star, or point out the bloodstains on the hand which grasps a sceptre The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian—to seek out truth, above all things, and to present to his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth as near as he can attain it To require, then, the journalist and the statesman to conform to the same rules is to mix up things essentially different, and is as unsound in theory as

unheard-of in practice . The Press does not, as Lord Derby says, aspire to exercise the influence of statesmen, but its own, and reserves that respect which Lord Derby is content to profess for a sanguinary and unscrupulous despotism for something more respectable than absolute power and brute force Yet, in discussing French politics, we have never assumed a tone so offensive as that which the Earl of Derby has introduced into his homily We have never said that for the last 60 years the Government of France has been a succession of usurpations of one kind or another, and then contradicted ourselves and libelled our neighbours by stating that these usurpations were, one and all, the deliberate choice of the nation or, still worse, that the extraordinary powers of the French President have been conferred upon him by the almost unanimous expression of the public opinion of France Such statements are indeed insulting to French honour and nationality Those who make them and believe them treat the gallant French nation as a race of slaves, barely competent for the choice of the tyrant who is to trample upon them

For "the French President" read "Mussolini" or "Hitler," and the argument of *The Times* in 1852 becomes applicable to the Italian and German peoples in this second quarter of the twentieth century. And a comparison between the language of the leading British journals upon the "foul deeds" that have marked the establishment of the Italian Fascist and German Nazi despotisms with the language of *The Times* in 1852 does not redound to the credit or the honour of the English Press to-day Too often, if not constantly, the proprietors and editors of our leading journals—with the honourable exceptions of one or two great provincial newspapers—have hugged to their souls the flattering unctious and the fallacious doctrine of Lord Derby that "as in these days the English Press aspires to share the influence of statesmen, so also must it share in the responsibilities of statesmen" If this doctrine be

accepted there can be no reason for British journalists to cavil at the demand put forward by Herr Hitler in February and March, 1938, that in the interest of satisfactory relations between Nazi Germany and Great Britain, the British Government must control the British Press and prevent it from publishing 'news or views unwelcome to the German Dictator'. The British Press as a whole would have been in a far stronger position to repudiate these suggestions with the contempt they merit had it never sacrificed its own freedom to a mistaken notion that it must "share the responsibilities of statesmen". Its first duty is to the public, not to any Minister or Government who may at a given moment be in office. To think or to act otherwise is to enter a half-way house on the downward way from the freedom to a totalitarian enslavement of the Press.

At bottom the issue at stake is that between liberal and despotic conceptions of political life, between that of responsible individual freedom among the members of a free community who look upon "the State" as the sum total of the executive functions which they delegate to Ministers and executive departments, and a Fascist or Nazi totalitarian conception of the State as "an Absolute," an end in itself, a semi-divine agency of government to which the community and all individual members of the community are and must be subordinate. Once the totalitarian concept is accepted or even toyed with, the enslavement, total or partial, of the Press follows inevitably. Conversely, the only sure safeguard of journalistic freedom is to reject the entire totalitarian concept and to affirm the intrinsic superiority of a community of free citizens who, instructed by a fearless and upright Press, can voluntarily attain a higher degree of elastic efficiency than is within the reach of any absolutist dictatorship. It would seem that British journalists, like British statesmen, sadly need a little schooling in the elements of political philosophy.

CHAPTER III

THE FINANCE OF THE PRESS

EARLY in the year 1895 a controversy arose in France upon the best constitutional means of safeguarding public liberties and of combining the essentials of freedom with stable institutions. A President of the Republic had resigned because he alleged that the French Constitution gave him inadequate powers to act as the supreme moderator of national affairs. At that moment an eminent historian, Professor Charles Seignobos of the Sorbonne, published in the *Revue de Paris* a study upon Montesquieu's famous theory of the "separation of powers" in the State as a safeguard of freedom. He traced its history and showed how far the notions of Montesquieu were fallacious, and what the experience of the nineteenth century had proved to be the true safeguards of public liberties. Even to-day the study has some bearing upon the problem presented by the "Newspaper Industry," for it raises points that need to be fairly met.

Montesquieu formulated the theory of the separation of powers in the chapter of his *Esprit des Loix* "On The English Constitution." The idea itself was not quite new. Locke as well as Swift and Bolingbroke had distinguished between the various powers in the State and the two latter had spoken of a "balance of power" which would prevent either of them from becoming predominant. But, Seignobos argued, civilised societies had been transformed so rapidly in the nineteenth century "by the progress of science, of material production, of education

and the Press, that they have tended to burst the political institutions with which former Governments clothed them", and after an acute analysis of the fate of Montesquieu's theory—that the executive, legislative and judicial "powers" should be rigidly separated from each other—Seignobos concluded

Against the authoritarian tendency of all executive agents, against abuses of power on the part of officials and even against the intrigues of legislative assemblies, the history of the nineteenth century reveals only two effective means of resistance. Both have been born in this century and could not be foreseen by Montesquieu.

The one is a people politically educated, accustomed to precise information, demanding much of its representatives, obliging them to render account of what they do, and to take account of the people's will, but resolved to support them, if need be, against the Government and by every means.

The other is an active Press, informed of everything, determined to search out, to publish, to criticise all the doings of men in power, a Press too independent of all officials and even of judges to have silence imposed upon it, and too rich or too numerous to be altogether corruptible.

With such a people and such a Press a State would be guaranteed against all kinds of despotism.

If Montesquieu could not foresee the changes that would come over the public life of civilised societies in the nineteenth century, none but a prophet could have descried in 1895 the conditions that would arise in Europe during the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. When Seignobos defined, as one of the safeguards of public freedom, a Press too rich or too numerous to be altogether corruptible, he failed to foresee the possibility that economic and financial influences might so reduce the number of newspapers as to give the owners of surviving journals a virtual monopoly, or that the financial magnitude if not the actual wealth

of these journals might curtail their independence and act as a drag upon the faithful discharge of their stewardship for public freedom

In France the Press cannot be said to have preserved its independence of influences, official and industrial, to such an extent as to render it a bulwark of public liberties or a constant purveyor of precise information. Nor have the majority of French journals gained, in the recent past, a reputation for sturdy incorruptibility. But in France it is still possible for any citizen who is ready to risk the loss of a few thousand pounds to start at least a "journal of opinion" and to find for it eager readers who will welcome its independent criticism of men and things. In this country we have no similar safeguard. The amount of money to be risked in starting a daily newspaper with any hope of attracting serious attention or gaining a national circulation, would probably exceed £1,000,000. The well-informed author of a series of articles upon "The Newspaper Industry," which appeared in *The Economist* during January, 1937, suggested that "a sum of the order of £2,000,000 had to be spent" before the last comer among national newspapers, the *Daily Herald*, "reached a self-supporting position. There are very few industries," he added, "which impose an entrance fee as high as this."

It was not always thus. When, after a preliminary experiment with what had been a bankrupt evening paper, the *Evening News*, the late Alfred Harmsworth started his *Daily Mail* in the 'nineties of last century he neither disposed of nor spent upon his enterprise anything approaching even £100,000. According to one estimate it was less than £15,000. Moreover his venture made a profit from the outset.

But some years later an attempt to found a London morning journal of a more "serious" type, the *Tribune*, cost its proprietor nearly £600,000. When the greater part of that sum had been spent he lost heart though, in

the opinion of some shrewd judges, the paper was then on the point of making ends meet and of earning a profit. While it is conceivable that another journalist with the peculiar genius needed to establish a successful newspaper may at some future time catch the tide as Moses Levy caught it in the eighteen-fifties with the *Daily Telegraph* or as Alfred Harmsworth caught it in the 'nineties, it remains broadly true that nowadays the amount of money which would have to be risked in adding to the number of British daily newspapers is so large as to save present newspaper owners from fear of effectual competition.

Directly and indirectly, Alfred Harmsworth (or Lord Northcliffe) and his younger brother, Harold Harmsworth (afterwards Lord Rothermere) were responsible for the change that has come over the financing of British newspapers during the past generation. Their enterprises, too, hastened, though they did not actually begin, the transformation of the Press into "the newspaper industry." I shall not attempt to record in figures all the transactions since the *Daily Mail* was taken over in 1905, together with the *Evening News* and the *Weekly Dispatch*, by a company registered as "Associated Newspapers, Limited," and since the foundation in the same year of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company, Limited," by the Harmsworth interests. Rather shall I seek to illustrate the general tendency of newspaper finance by these and subsequent examples, including the operations that attended the liquidation of the Northcliffe estate after Lord Northcliffe's death in August, 1922. There is no finality in such matters as buying and selling of newspapers. Statistics accurate to-day may be inaccurate to-morrow. But enough is publicly known and recorded to warrant a general description of the tendencies at work and to justify doubt whether an undertaking so heavily capitalised and, in some instances, so over-capitalised as the British Press

now is can be entirely free to discharge its mission as a warden of the public conscience

The beginning of the Harmsworth's venture into daily journalism was marked by their purchase in 1894 of a London evening paper, the *Evening News*, for the sum of £25,000. This evening journal had been started in 1881, and though it had been heavily subsidised by Conservative party funds, it had got into such low water that its affairs had to be put into the hands of a receiver. A wide-awake — though impecunious — journalist, the late Mr Kennedy Jones, is said to have received as a gift a packet of 12,000 worthless shares in the *Evening News*. Armed with them he attended a meeting of creditors and persuaded the receiver to grant him an option on the purchase of the paper. Then, so runs the story, he induced Alfred Harmsworth, who had made some profits out of a weekly magazine called *Answers*, which he had started in 1887, to provide the £25,000 to buy the *Evening News* which had cost its former proprietors the better part of £500,000 since its foundation.

The paper bought, Alfred and Harold Harmsworth with Kennedy Jones began drastically to overhaul its finances. At that time it was printing 15 or 16 columns of racing and sporting news daily, while its principal rival, the *Star*, was printing even more. Alfred Harmsworth and his associates began by cutting down the racing news to six or seven columns and by broadening the paper's appeal in ways which they thought likely to attract popular attention. They were helped by a sensational murder, and thanks to their exploitation of public interest in it and to their promptness in publishing ahead of their rivals the result of the trial at the Chelmsford Assizes the circulation of the *Evening News* increased by 40,000 copies in a few months. At the end of the first year they found it had made a sub-

stantial profit Two years later they decided to risk this profit and some other capital in starting the *Daily Mail*

One episode in Alfred Harmsworth's handling of the *Evening News* is too amusing not to be related He had instructed his sub-editors to brighten the paper inexpensively by reprinting jokes and satirical paragraphs from American comic papers One such paragraph referred to a mythical Jew on Broadway who was supposed to have condoled with another Jew upon a disastrous fire in his premises "last week," and to have expressed the hope that the premises were insured "Not last week, you fool, next week!" was the alleged answer As ill-luck would have it a Jewish tradesman in Shoreditch, bearing the same name as that given to the mythical Jew in the American comic paper, had claimed insurance for a fire in his London premises. He promptly issued a writ for libel against the *Evening News* In vain did Harmsworth protest that he was totally unaware of the British Jew's name and of the fact that the premises in Shoreditch had been burned He had either to run the risk of a libel action or to compensate the plaintiff in cash Harmsworth chose the latter course and paid £600 indemnity—whereupon he received a grateful letter from the British Jew, who informed him that a small syndicate which had been formed to "run" the action against the *Evening News* would be giving a little dinner to celebrate its triumph and would be very happy if Mr Alfred Harmsworth would attend it!

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However small may have been the original capital of the *Daily Mail*, its profits were reinvested in the paper again and again until they were so large that its capital value could be fixed at more than £1,000,000 when it was taken over in 1905 by "Associated Newspapers

Limited" At the end of the first year (1906) this Company paid 8 per cent on its 1,600,000 shares, 10 per cent from 1909 to 1910, 12 per cent from 1911 to 1913, 17 per cent in 1914, and as much as 20 per cent from 1918 to 1920 In September, 1920, there was, besides a distribution of £250,000 in bonus shares, one new share for every two deferred ordinary shares previously held, and a dividend of 5 per cent. free of tax was paid on the enlarged capital.

Thus in the sixteen years of the Company's existence the profits of an original deferred ordinary share (which alone had full voting power) amounted to 207½ per cent, while the nominal value of the shares had increased 50 per cent Of the 750,000 deferred ordinary shares, 441,000 belonged to the Harmsworth family in June, 1921

In the same year as the foundation of "Associated Newspapers Limited" the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company Limited was formed to acquire large tracks of forest (3,400 square miles in all) for the purpose of manufacturing paper, the bulk of the share capital being held by the other Harmsworth companies which were thus assured of a continuous supply of "newsprint" independently of paper merchants. Four years later they set up the Imperial Paper Mills Limited at Gravesend with extensive wharfage at which steamers, bringing the wood pulp from Newfoundland, could berth Within ten years the output of this mill was 600 tons of paper per week

In this company the Amalgamated Press Limited held a controlling interest The Amalgamated Press began with Alfred Harmsworth's *Answers*, was registered in 1896 as "Harmsworth Brothers Limited" and gradually increased its publications until it controlled some seventy-five weekly and monthly periodicals Its paid-up capital was £1,065,000 made up of 515,000 ordinary shares, which alone had voting rights, and

550,000 5 per cent cumulative preference shares At the end of 1913 there was a distribution of bonus shares at the rate of three ordinary shares for every ten ordinary shares previously held Very high dividends were paid on the ordinary shares for the twenty years between 1901-2 to 1920-21 The lowest was 35 per cent in 1903-4, in every other year the dividend was 40 per cent exclusive of the bonus shares issued in 1913 For some years after 1918 half the dividend was tax-free This made the actual dividend equal to more than 48 per cent Indeed this Company's total profits in the nine years from 1913 to 1921 were £4,142,190, or nearly four times the original capital of £1,065,000,

After the death of Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe) in August, 1922, his holdings in his various newspaper companies were liquidated, or were taken over mainly by his brother, Harold Harmsworth (Lord Rothermere) In 1926 the Amalgamated Press passed under the control of the Berry Brothers with Sir William Berry (Lord Camrose) at their head Its issued capital is now some £7,200,000, including £1,500,000 of 3½ per cent 1st Mortgage Debenture Stock It continued to make large profits and to pay high dividends on its £1,200,000 of ordinary share capital, though the practice of issuing bonus shares seems to have been dropped under Lord Camrose's management In 1931 its profits were £706,507 and the dividend earned on its ordinary capital was 37·7 per cent Of this percentage only 15 per cent was paid to shareholders, a large balance being put to general reserve During the years 1932 to 1937 the earned dividends were only once below 20 per cent, the dividends actually paid to shareholders being, however, limited to 11 per cent

In addition to its ownership of more than one hundred magazines and other publications, the Amalgamated Press controlled two large papermaking companies which provided nearly all the paper used by its publica-

tions as well as newsprint for several of the leading London and provincial newspapers

If the profit-making of the Amalgamated Press under Lord Camrose's management was thus controlled in somewhat conservative fashion, its earlier record in money-making was beaten by that of another Harmsworth company which was formed in 1910. This was known as "The Pictorial Newspaper Company Limited". It took over the *Daily Mirror* which Harold Harmsworth had acquired from his brother Alfred in 1914. In 1915 it started the *Sunday Pictorial* as a Rothermere venture, and in March 1920 the Company was reconstructed as "Daily Mirror Newspapers Limited". From 1911 to 1914 the dividend on the 100,000 deferred ordinary shares of the Pictorial Newspaper Company Limited ranged from 15 per cent to 20 per cent, but from 1915 to 1919 they were 60 per cent. In the year 1919-1920 the dividend was 55 per cent free of tax. Upon reconstruction in March, 1920, the holders of 5 per cent preference shares in the old company received a new 8 per cent share in exchange, for each 7 per cent preference share a new 8 per cent share plus 2s 6d in cash. The holders of the 100,000 deferred shares received seven new ordinary shares for each deferred share. On these a dividend of 5 per cent was paid, with a further distribution of dividends from the *Sunday Pictorial*, which became a separate company after the reconstruction. The holder of a deferred share from 1910 onwards thus received 450 per cent of his investment and the nominal value of his holding was multiplied by seven.

¹ In 1908 Lord Northcliffe acquired a large financial interest in *The Times*. The complicated ownership of that great journal—a result of the first John Walter's division of the property into sixteenths as something

THE PRESS

distinct from the Walter printing business—had ended by producing conditions with which a majority of the proprietors were highly dissatisfied. The circulation of the paper, which had touched 68,000 at the price of 3d in the days of its second great editor, Delane, had fallen to not more than 38,000, and its income had seriously decreased. In these circumstances Mr Arthur Fraser Walter, second son of John Walter III, arranged to amalgamate *The Times* with the *Standard*—a journal even less prosperous than *The Times*—and to appoint Mr C Arthur Pearson (afterwards Sir Arthur Pearson) as its Managing Director. Hearing of this arrangement, Northcliffe came into touch with prominent members of *The Times* staff and with some of its other proprietors. In agreement with them he put forward an offer so much more satisfactory to the other proprietors, who had taken legal proceedings against Mr A. F. Walter, that they were able to persuade the Court to prefer it to the Walter-Pearson arrangement. *The Times* newspaper was then taken over by "The Times Publishing Company" with an authorised capital of £750,000, which was increased in 1920 to £1,000,000. Though Northcliffe did not hold a majority of the controlling ordinary shares included in this capital he secured an undertaking that the voting power of the Walter shares should be at his disposal during his lifetime. Thus from 1908 onwards he held effective control of *The Times*, though he only acquired full control of it in his own right a few months before his death, when he bought the entire Walter holding from Mr John Walter IV, son and successor of Mr A. F. Walter. Upon Northcliffe's death in August, 1922, his estate, amounting to some £5,000,000, had to be liquidated under his will, and a series of remarkable financial transactions followed.

With all his faults, which were many, and with all his

qualities, which were not few, Northcliffe was a journalist through and through. He was not primarily a financier or even an industrialist. If he made a large fortune out of newspapers and the newspaper industry, it was for "the Press" and its influence that he chiefly cared. In matters of high policy his sense of public trusteeship was keen. Before him newspapers had been bought and sold—sometimes with little care for the convictions or the rights of those who had helped to make them valuable "properties." But these transactions had been rather in the nature of private "deals" than essays in "high" finance. After his death it was found that he had bequeathed a considerable proportion of his fortune to the staffs of his various undertakings, just as during his life, he had helped to raise the wages of printers and the salaries of working journalists to higher levels than they had ever reached before.

His brother, Lord Rothermere, had, on the contrary, always been primarily a financier. His instinct for moneymaking amounted almost to genius. Nor did he apply it only to newspapers. He "went into" businesses of many kinds, such as cattle-farming and fruit-growing. Few men could ever boast that they had got the better of him in a "deal," and everything he touched seemed to turn if not into gold at least into a profitable investment. But he cherished one ambition that remained unfulfilled. He longed to own *The Times*. In the spring of 1921 Northcliffe's health began to fail. Rothermere then offered to lighten his brother's burdens by buying all the Northcliffe holding in the ordinary and preference shares of *The Times*. After some hesitation Northcliffe consented to sell, and informed a director of The Times Publishing Company of his decision. Means were then found to persuade him to change his mind before the "deal" was concluded—much to Rothermere's disappointment.

At that time Northcliffe's control of *The Times* was

still based upon the agreement which had been concluded with the Walters in 1908 that he should dispose of the voting power of the Walter holding. In return for this agreement, and in order to safeguard the traditional Walter interest in *The Times*, Northcliffe undertook that on his death the head of the Walter family should be entitled to buy back the Northcliffe shares at par or at a price to be fixed by arbitration on the basis of the last three years' dividends on the ordinary shares. As there had been no dividends on ordinary shares for some years, this arrangement—had it lasted—would have enabled Mr. John Walter IV to buy the Northcliffe holding at not more than par after Northcliffe's death in August, 1922. But in June, 1922, Mr. John Walter sold to Northcliffe all the Walter shares in *The Times*, a transaction which nullified the previous agreement, and the only prospective interest which Mr. John Walter retained in the future of *The Times* was a clause in Northcliffe's will to the effect that Mr. Walter should have an option to buy Northcliffe's entire holding in *The Times* at whatever price the highest bidder might offer.

On Northcliffe's death it became a matter of importance to know what the highest bid would be. Lord Rothermere was still eager to buy *The Times*, and others were equally eager that he should not buy it. His representatives conveyed the impression that he would bid up to £1,000,000 for his late brother's holding but not more—a price more than double the amount Mr. John Walter would have needed to raise had he not sold his shares to Northcliffe two months earlier. But when the sale under Northcliffe's will came before a Judge in Chambers, it was found that Lord Rothermere's bid was at least one-third higher than £1,000,000. This contingency had been foreseen, and Major the Hon. John Jacob Astor authorised Mr. Walter's representatives to equal the Rothermere bid.

Thus the control of *The Times* passed into the hands of Major Astor, who presently formed a holding company with a special charter designed to prevent the future sale of *The Times* to any purchaser save with the assent of a body of trustees consisting of the Lord Chief Justice of England, the Warden of All Souls College, Oxford, the Governor of the Bank of England, the President of the Royal Society and the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Under this Charter shareholders in *The Times* can only sell their holdings unconditionally to Major Astor or to Mr John Walter, all other sales being subject to the assent of the trustees. In this way it was hoped to remove the danger that *The Times* might fall into the hands of purchasers whom the trustees might think undesirable.

Admirably designed though this arrangement appears to be as a means of safeguarding the future independence of the leading British newspaper, there is some danger that it may tend subtly to deaden the militant spirit which characterised *The Times* under its great editors, Barnes and Delane, and may lead its staff to think themselves caretakers of a national institution rather than journalists whose paper must stand or fall on its or their merits. No charter could avail to preserve the influence and the value of *The Times*, even as a national institution, were it to lag behind in the journalistic race or to be worsted either in respect of dynamic quality or in soundness of policy by rivals which appeal to the same public. At its price of 2d, and with a circulation of roughly 200,000 copies, *The Times* has now to face the competition of the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* at the price of 1d and with a circulation of more than 650,000 copies. Should the *Daily Telegraph* develop a sturdy "soul" of its own—and during the international crisis of September, 1938, its "soul" compared very favourably with that of *The Times*—as distinguished from newspaper-making ability, *The Times* might need to

invoke the shade of Thomas Barnes or, perhaps, even that of Northcliffe, in order to hold its ground

After being defeated a second time in his attempt to buy *The Times*, Lord Rothermere turned his attention to his late brother's other newspaper properties. In September, 1922, the following announcement was issued —

The late Lord Northcliffe, who held the majority of the deferred shares in Associated Newspapers, Limited, was thereby the principal proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, *Weekly Dispatch* and *Overseas Mail*. The 400,000 deferred shares which he held have now come under the control of his brother, Viscount Rothermere.

The 400,000 deferred ordinary shares, in which the control of these newspapers was vested, were bought by Lord Rothermere at £4 each for a total of £1,600,000. Thereupon Lord Rothermere formed "The Daily Mail Trust," which acquired from him these 400,000 shares in return for ordinary shares of the Trust. The capital of the Trust was fixed at £1,600,000 in ordinary shares of £1 each, of which 2s per share, or £160,000, was paid up. The "Daily Mail Trust" also created £1,600,000 of 7 per cent. Guaranteed fifteen-year first mortgage debenture stock. This stock was heavily advertised, offered to and subscribed for by the public at 99 per cent. In other words, the public provided £1,440,000 of the £1,600,000 required to pay for Lord Northcliffe's shares, and Lord Rothermere and his friends paid only £160,000 for their shares though these shares entitled them to the whole of the equity in the 400,000 Associated Newspaper shares after 7 per cent had been paid on the debentures.

At that time the total number of deferred shares in Associated Newspapers Limited was 750,000, and after payment of the preference and ordinary dividends (£67,000) more than one-half of the profit of Associated

Newspapers belonged to the "Daily Mail Trust" In the year 1922-23 the profits of Associated Newspapers were £680,209 as compared with £224,123 in 1921-22, so that the "Daily Mail Trust's" portion of the profits was about £360,000, of which the interest on its 7 per cent debentures absorbed only £112,000 The dividend actually declared was 35 per cent, and a capital bonus of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent was given, yielding to the Trust £140,000 in cash and £133,333 in bonus capital in the year of the debenture issue

In 1923-24 the profit of the "Daily Mail Trust" was £910,408 The dividend was raised to 40 per cent and two more capital bonuses—of 25 per cent and 20 per cent respectively—were paid From these figures it would seem that while the public provided most of the money to buy the Northcliffe holding it got less than half, and Lord Rothermere and his friends (as holders of £160,000 in paid-up ordinary shares) more than half the profit It is true that the public were given a "debenture" at 7 per cent, the "debenture" being secured upon the deferred shares of Associated Newspapers, the uncalled capital of the "Daily Mail Trust" and upon a guarantee from the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial* newspapers But what the public was really given was a limited interest in a newspaper equity under the guise of a debenture, for a debenture on a newspaper company is not a debenture at all except in so far as its value is covered by physical assets, real property, such as machines, buildings or other realisable wealth The rest is mainly a psychological asset called "goodwill", and it has been well said that newspaper finance is mainly a question of capitalising goodwill

Nor was this all When dealings began in the deferred shares of Associated Newspapers Limited in November, 1922—a month after the issue of the "Daily Mail Trust" debentures—the opening price was £6 5s per share, as compared with the £4 per share that Lord

Rothermere had agreed to pay for them, and the value of these shares was afterwards nearly doubled by the issue of a capital bonus amounting to more than 78 per cent of the original total. Besides, under Lord Rothermere's skilful financial management, the profits of Associated Newspapers continued to expand. In the year ended March 21, 1935, they were £917,046, and a 40 per cent dividend was again paid on the deferred shares in which the "Daily Mail Trust's" holding had by that time become 800,000 instead of 400,000.

In the autumn of 1923 Lord Rothermere extended his operations. He bought the whole of the late Sir Edward Hulton's newspaper interests for £5,000,000. At the same time he sold to E. Hulton and Company the "Associated Scottish Newspapers"—Lord Rothermere's Scottish interests—for £1,000,000. The "Daily Mail Trust" then appeared on the scene. It bought the Hulton Newspapers and the Rothermere Scottish papers for £6,000,000, and sold to Lord Beaverbrook for £250,000 a 51 per cent interest in the *Evening Standard*, which Sir Edward Hulton had owned. Again the public subscribed the necessary money. The "Daily Mail Trust" issued to the public £8,000,000 of 7 per cent debentures at the price of 99, enough to pay for these operations, and to redeem, at a premium of 10 per cent, the first "Daily Mail Trust" debenture issue of £1,600,000. Meanwhile, as I have said, the "Daily Mail Trust" holding of Associated Newspaper deferred shares had risen to 800,000. It owned also 918,056 ordinary shares in E. Hulton and Company and sundry other investments, and the only addition made to the Trust's ordinary paid-up capital was £40,000, which brought the total up to 200,000 at 2s per share, the authorised capital being raised at the same time from £1,600,000 to £2,500,000. Again the "debentures" were guaranteed by Lord Rothermere's two picture

papers, and again the issue was heavily advertised and heavily oversubscribed

The "Daily Mail Trust" then proceeded to make a big profit on the Hulton operation. Early in 1924 the Trust sold to the *Sunday Times*—owned by the Berry group—the Manchester publications of the Hulton Company (excluding the *Daily Sketch* and the *Illustrated Sunday Herald*) for £5,500,000. Together with the £250,000 received for Lord Beaverbrook's share of the *Evening Standard*, it thus made a profit of £750,000, plus the value of the *Daily Sketch* and the *Illustrated Sunday Herald*. With the proceeds the "Daily Mail Trust" repaid £4,000,000, or one half of its debentures, at 110. The *Daily Sketch* and the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* were then formed into a separate company which issued £1,600,000 of 6½ per cent debentures at 92 and, out of the proceeds, £1,200,000 were applied to the redemption of a further sum of "Daily Mail Trust" debentures. Thus the profit on the Hulton purchase was raised to £2,350,000, plus the whole of the equity in the *Daily Sketch* and *Illustrated Sunday Herald*. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the 2s paid-up shares of the "Daily Mail Trust" were soon sold and bought on the Stock Exchange at over 50s each.

The later operations of the "Daily Mail Trust"—now called the "Daily Mail and General Trust Limited"—are less easy to trace. In 1929 its net profits (after deduction of tax) were £387,822, a total never since exceeded, and its ordinary dividend was 17½ per cent tax free. In 1936 its net profits were £306,403, but it paid a tax-free dividend of 11½ per cent and distributed a capital bonus of 10 per cent in ordinary shares, or one share for every ten ordinary shares at the price of 50s. In 1932 it had also issued one share for every eight ordinary shares at the price of 25s, but in that year its net profits had fallen to £173,283 and its tax-

free dividend to $8\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. The actual liability of its ordinary shareholders for calls upon capital authorised but not paid up is hard to determine because—according to a *Banker's Investment Guide*—the following bonuses in reduction of uncalled liability on partly-paid shares have been distributed: 275 per cent in 1925, $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent in 1926, 50 per cent in 1927 and $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent in 1928. Seeing that only 2s. per share or 10 per cent was originally paid-up on the ordinary capital of the Trust, it would seem that Lord Rothermere and his fellow-shareholders have been very handsomely rewarded for their venture in newspaper finance.

Nor was Lord Rothermere alone in perceiving how profitable newspaper "properties," as distinguished from journalism, could be. The sons of the late Alderman John Mathias Berry, of Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales—usually known as the "Berry Group," of which Lord Camrose, formerly Sir William Berry, was the most prominent member—were hardly less skilful than he. While the eldest of the Berry brothers was closely associated with the mining and other interests of the late Lord Rhondda, the second (now Lord Camrose) began life as a working journalist, and in 1901 founded the *Advertising World*. From 1915 onwards he became Editor-in-Chief of the *Sunday Times*, and afterwards chairman or deputy chairman of several newspaper and publishing companies which the Berry interests controlled. These companies included the *Sunday Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* (which was bought from the late Lord Burnham and has since absorbed the *Morning Post*), the *Graphic* publications, Kelly's Directories and more than one printing company, besides a number of provincial newspapers.

After the *Sunday Times*, or the Berry Group, had bought the Hulton newspapers from the "Daily Mail

Trust" for £5,500,000 it sold them, together with the copyright and goodwill of the *Sunday Times*, to a new company called "The Allied Newspapers Limited" for a total price of £7,900,000. Of this price £4,400,000 was payable in cash, £1,500,000 in debenture stock and £2,000,000 in ordinary shares. The capital of "Allied Newspapers Limited" was fixed at £2,000,000 ordinary shares, £4,750,000 of 8 per cent cumulative preference shares, and £1,500,000 in 9 per cent debentures. A commission of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in cash, together with 510,000 ordinary shares, was payable to the firm which subscribed for the preference shares and sold them to the public. The profits of the various newspapers bought by "Allied Newspapers Limited," which were only £285,704 in 1919, were as high as £855,199 in 1923. After some falling off in 1931 and 1932 they rose again to £721,367 in 1935 and to £742,525 in 1936.

Meanwhile the Berry Group did another great stroke of business. It formed a Company called the "Allied Northern Newspapers" to buy the whole of the capital of the Associated Scottish Newspapers which Lord Rothermere had sold to E. Hulton and Company. It also bought several newspaper interests in Scotland and Northern England for £2,042,000 in cash and £85,000 in shares. The Company thereupon issued to the public £2,300,000 of $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent First Mortgage Guarantee "debentures" at 98 per cent on the security of preference and ordinary shares and a second debenture. The total ordinary capital was £1,000,000 and the whole of it was issued to "Allied Newspapers Limited," with the exception of seven shares of the 85,000 already mentioned, in return for a guarantee of the interest and principal of the debentures of "Allied Northern Newspapers Limited." This guarantee of the parent company enhanced the value of the "Allied Northern Newspapers" debentures. The average profits of the newspapers bought had not been so spectacular as to promise

large dividends after the interest on debentures had been paid

The "Berry Group" acted as a unit until January, 1937, when its various interests were divided under three controls. Lord Camrose kept the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post*, the *Financial Times* and the Amalgamated Press. His brother, Lord Kemsley, took control of the group's provincial newspaper interests together with the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily Sketch* of London, and Lord Iliffe took the companies which publish Kelly's directories and a number of trade and technical periodicals. Thus the "Berry Group," as such, ceased to exist, and its component parts stood alongside other "groups" of newspaper interests, like the "Cadbury Group," which controls the *News-Chronicle* and the *Star* in London, the "Odhams Group," which owns a number of periodicals and controls the *Daily Herald*, and the "Beaverbrook Group," of which the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express* and the *Evening Standard* are the chief publications. The principal London and provincial journals that are independent of "groups" are *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Yorkshire Post*, while four Sunday newspapers, including the *Observer*, are also independently owned. None of these papers has been the object, or the subject, of conspicuous "newspaper finance."

Some twelve years ago I drew attention to the peculiar characteristics of newspaper finance in a study entitled "The Disease of the Press." This disease, as I see it, consists in the use of the Press as a source of pecuniary profit beyond the point needed to ensure the political, moral and financial independence of journalism. Whether or not the public, who subscribe most of the money for the operations of newspaper financiers, burn their fingers or get cash to burn may be a matter of minor moment. If investors or speculators like to run the

risk they would only have themselves to blame in the event of loss—were it not for one consideration which bears upon the standing of the Press as a whole rather than upon the investments of individuals. This consideration is whether the vendors of newspaper shares and “debentures,” who are at the same time newspaper proprietors with means of advertising their own issues of shares and stocks, are likely fully to discharge in regard to them the proper journalistic function of offering impartial criticism in the public interest. If this question cannot be answered affirmatively, it would seem that modern newspaper finance tends to afflict the Press and the public with a potential evil for which it is hard to foresee the cure. Of this evil there are several symptoms, some of which relate to methods of increasing the circulation of newspapers so that they may gain larger revenues from advertisements. But the most serious symptom, and the most menacing to the health of what Socialists call “capitalist society,” may well be the reluctance of newspapers which are themselves units in vast money-making concerns to examine searchingly the affairs of other money-making concerns and public companies that advertise reports of their annual meetings in the columns of those newspapers. The high rates paid for the publication of “company reports” by newspapers may quicken those newspapers’ understanding of the proverb that they who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

If it be argued that the distribution of newspaper shares among the investing public ought to act as a corrective to this state of things, inasmuch as it is a form of public ownership of public enterprises, the answer is that public ownership of shares in newspapers does not imply public control, since control is usually vested in a category of shares not largely held by the public. The real owners of newspapers are those who hold a majority of these controlling shares and, with

them, the power of securing for themselves, directly and indirectly, a high proportion of the profits. Besides, ordinary investors whose holdings carry with them no power of control are apt to lock upon newspapers merely as business undertakings, and tacitly to approve of any policy that may seem likely to increase the market value of their holdings. If only for these reasons the public marketing of newspaper shares is not necessarily a healthy proceeding and may be very much the reverse

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The problem of maintaining a healthy Press, financially and economically independent enough to enable it to withstand official or other interested pressure, would still be difficult if newspapers stood alone instead of being the pivots of a great industry. Nowadays the Press is the centre of a large number of co-ordinated industrial undertakings which are not exclusively controlled by men who look upon the production of newspapers as involving a moral stewardship for the public. Taken together with the production of periodicals, the "newspaper industry" gives more employment than either brick-making or brewing and nearly as much as the spinning and weaving industries. In 1935 it ranked, as an employer of labour, above the heavy industries of shipbuilding and the smelting and rolling of iron and steel. In London Manchester and Glasgow it is now one of the most important of all industries, and so rapidly has it expanded that the numbers of people employed in it increased by more than 40 per cent in the decade between 1921 and 1931, that is to say from 56,488 to 79,458. These figures are independent of the paper-making or newsprint industry and of the 100,000 or more persons employed in distributing newspapers or in canvassing for subscribers.

It stands to reason that the business men who manage or control interests of this magnitude can scarcely look

upon journalism proper with the same respect as they would if their livelihood or their fortunes depended solely upon the skill and character of journalists. In what is becoming, if it has not already become, a "totalitarian" enterprise the tendency of the industrial magnates who control it is naturally to lump journalists together with the other personnel of the industry and to allow them just enough initiative and freedom to keep the public from perceiving that the Press is no longer free. Business men are apt to assess the importance of any item in their balance sheets by its actual cost, and the cost of original journalistic work in the production of a popular newspaper with a large circulation is hardly more than one-sixth of the whole outlay. The *Report on The British Press*, recently published by the group of investigators known as P E P (Political and Economic Planning), compares the estimated balance sheets of two imaginary daily papers with the figures published by Lord Beaverbrook in September, 1937, for the *Daily Express*, and shows that its estimates were very near the mark. Taking the actual figures of the *Daily Express* it appears that (out of a total yearly outlay of £5,025,000) paper and ink cost £1,375,000, or nearly 36 per cent., the wages of mechanical workers, £700,000, or 18·3 per cent., distribution (including railway charges), £650,000, and editorial expenses (including the cost of news), only £600,000. But there is nothing to show what proportion of these editorial expenses is actually paid to journalists in the form of salaries. It is probably far less than the cost of canvassing for subscribers and advertising the paper, which is put at £400,000.

Thus it will be seen that journalism proper cuts a poor figure in a newspaper balance-sheet. Business men may, therefore, be disposed to under-estimate its value and to judge the work of journalists mainly from a "business" standpoint. And when in the exercise of their true vocation—which, in the words of the

pronouncement by *The Times* on February 7, 1852, is "To seek out truth, above all things, and to present to readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth, as near as they can attain to it"—journalists trouble markets or offend statesmen or potentates whose favour the magnates of the newspaper industry may wish to cultivate or to retain, such journalists are likely to have a sense of their relative unimportance in the "industry" duly impressed upon them

For the present condition of newspaper finance it is not easy to suggest a remedy. There is certainly no single remedy, no panacea. Even if all newspapers were placed under safeguards similar to those which Major the Hon J J Astor instituted for the purpose of preserving *The Times* as a national institution the disease would not be cured. Sheltered seclusion from rough winds would not foster virility in the Press as a whole. The remedy or remedies may lie in other directions. One corrective may be found in British broadcasting, which brings the news, without advertisement, into millions of homes and, to that extent, gives a news service on cheaper terms and with a wider range than any newspaper can offer. Another remedy, painful but wholesome, may come through a gradual deflation of newspaper finance, and in the development of a type of newspaper, or news-letter, appealing to a better-educated public, and independent of advertisers because more economically produced. But the chief remedy must come from leaders and trustworthy educators of public opinion. Public men are no longer quite at the mercy of the newspaper Press. They can speak to millions direct through the broadcasting microphone. They can help to build up standards of taste and judgment to which the pressure of public feeling would compel the controllers of newspapers to conform. No

care can be too great and no safeguard too stringent to preserve the independence of broadcasting. In so far as the press prostitutes to the business of money-making its mission of instructing and educating the people, that mission should be carried on by other means. Care for their own pockets may then invigorate the consciences of newspaper proprietors

After all, the health of the public mind is at stake, and it is of vital importance, in the true sense of that hackneyed term, that the mind of the community should not be subject to any preponderating control. The essence of democratic freedom is that there should be checks and balances to prevent lopsidedness of political and social influence. At present the influence exercised by the British press under the control of its financial magnates is not well balanced. Nor have those magnates always been shrewd even from the standpoint of their own interests. It is not merely that the conduct of their financial operations, the "watering" of their capital by bonus shares and other devices, have supplied Socialists and Communists with much ammunition for their campaign against capitalism, but that they have persistently encouraged or palliated methods of lawless violence abroad on the assumption that those methods were sanctified by being used, ostensibly, in defence of capital and property. The obtuseness of "business minds" in matters of high public policy and of individual freedom can rarely have been more strikingly shown than in their shortsighted encouragement of violence abroad. From the writings they have authorised, and the policies they have recommended, it would be easy to glean an anthology of maxims to justify violent interference with their own properties if ever the pendulum of public feeling should swing against that "capitalist system" which their financial practices have tended to discredit.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVOLUTION OF NEWSPAPERS

WHEN and how did newspapers become newspapers? The answer is less simple and more interesting than it would be if it were given only in the shape of dates and bald facts. While "news" is as old as mankind, and its importance has always been recognised, the regular spreading of it in writing or print by journalists or, as they were called in the reign of Charles I, "diurnall-makers," is comparatively modern. "Journalism" in this sense, is an aspect of political freedom. "News-letters," "news-books" or "diurnals" were efforts to satisfy public curiosity upon matters of moment, and it was soon found that they could only succeed if they gave information on a wide variety of topics. In 1725 a weekly journalist put the case aptly. "Our Taste for News is a very odd one," he wrote. "Yet it must be fed, and tho' it seems a Jest to Foreigners, yet it is an Amusement we can't be without, and certainly rises from a Sense of Liberty, which inspires us with a Curiosity to know the Affairs of our Superiors in order to censure or applaud them as we see Cause." Have we not here the strongest argument for a free Press—curiosity on the part of a community about public men and affairs in order to "censure or applaud" as cause may arise?

The earliest form in which authoritative news was conveyed from the capital to the country was by Royal letters, sent out from London for general information. This was done centuries before the printing press came into action, and when private individuals first availed

themselves of the printing press to circulate news the authorities at once stepped in. Royal letters announcing and describing the victories of Crécy and Agincourt or the defeat of Perkin Warbeck were one thing, encroachment on the Royal prerogative by the private printing and circulation of news was quite another. In the reign of Henry VIII this "abuse" had become so general that a Royal proclamation prohibited "certain books printed of newes of the prosperous successes of the King's Majesties arms in Scotland" and ordered them to be brought in and burned "within 24 houres after proclamation made on pain of imprisonment." None the less the "abuse" continued. Throughout the reign of Elizabeth the writers of news-letters became increasingly active. Their epistles were written and copied by hand; and it was not until the reign of her successor, James I, was drawing to a close that the first Royal permission was given to print news from abroad. The printing of home news was forbidden.

Gradually, as the public demand for information became more general, the written news-letters were overshadowed by printed pamphlets called "news-books," which multiplied exceedingly under such names as "Mercuries," "Intelligences," "Relations," "Corantos," and "Gazettes." In the University of Oxford during the reign of Charles I the prayer was offered. "Wee desire the Coranto-makers to be inspired with the Spirit of truth, that one may know when to praise Thy blessed and glorious name and when to pray unto Thee, for we often praise and Laude Thy Holy Name for the King of Sweden's victories and afterwards we heare that there is no such thing, and we oftentime pray unto Thee to relieve the same King in his distresses, and we Likewise heare that there is noe such Cause"—(the King of Sweden being Gustavus Adolphus, the Protestant hero of the period)

A less sanctimonious reflection upon journalistic

accuracy was written by a Cavalier poet during the Civil War. At the beginning of the war the Royalist General most feared by Parliamentarians was Sir Ralph Hopton, the King's Lieutenant-General of Horse in the West. Puritan "Coranto-makers" guessed that news of Hopton's death in battle would hearten their readers. So the "authors," that is to say the editors, of these "Corantos" killed Hopton off twice or thrice without his being a penny the worse. Then a Cavalier rhymester wrote chaffingly —

There Hopton was slain, again and again,
Or else my author did lie

Despite a great increase in "news-books" during the Civil War, and the appearance of something like "news-papers" after the Restoration, the writers of individual news-letters continued to flourish throughout the seventeenth century. Foremost among them were Sir Roger L'Estrange and Henry Muddiman. So strong was the demand in the provinces for news from London that in order to cope with it a popular scribe, one Ichabod Dawks, began to issue news-letters so printed as to imitate handwriting. He assured his readers that "this letter will be done upon good writing-paper" and "will contain double the quantity of the written news" so that it can be "read with abundance more ease and pleasure."

Then, as now, the ease and pleasure of readers were not always the ease and pleasure of writers. If Macaulay is to be believed, the "authors" of news-letters were busy men. "The news-writer," he says, "rambled from coffee-room to coffee-room collecting reports, squeezed himself into the Sessions Houses at the Old Bailey if there was an interesting trial, nay, perhaps obtained permission to the gallery in Whitehall and noticed how King and Duke looked. In this way he gathered materials for weekly epistles destined to enlighten some country town

or some bench of rustic magistrates. Such were the sources from which the inhabitants of the largest provincial cities, and the great body of the gentry and clergy, learned almost all they knew of the history of their own time"—without being eager to pay for what they learned. As Ichabod Dawks found, subscribers to these news-letters were often loth either to pay their subscriptions or to defray the cost of postage. Addison, for his part, sneered comprehensively at readers as well as the writers of news-letters. "There is no Humour in my Countrymen, which I am more inclined to wonder at," he wrote, "than their general Thirst after News. There are about half a Dozen ingenious Men, who live very plentifully upon this Curiosity of their fellow Subjects. The Mind is kept in a perpetual Gape after knowledge, and punished with that burning Thirst, which is the Portion of our modern newsmongers and Coffee-house Politicians." Addison also marvelled that the public "read the Advertisements with the same Curiosity as the Articles of public News."

The contempt, sincere or feigned, of Addison and others did not deter people from reading news-letters when they could. But when the practice of printing news became more general, news-letters took the form of "London letters" to the provincial Press, a form of journalism that still survives. Little by little, local gazettes and London newspapers replaced the news-letter and the news-book, though at first they only gave news from abroad. Domestic topics were too dangerous to be touched. So sharp was the supervision of the Press that despite the permission granted by James I, not a single news-sheet or newspaper seems to have been published for some years after the accession of Charles I. But with the meeting of the Short Parliament in 1640 "public opinion" could no longer be muzzled and the English newspaper system began to take shape.

These newspapers were weeklies—dailies were not yet

thought of Their contents were chiefly summaries of parliamentary proceedings And in August, 1642, three months after Charles I had raised his standard against Parliament at Nottingham, the first true newspaper came into being Regular English journalism began with the Civil War and the political strife that led up to it From the outset it was vivacious and, on the whole, truthful The public executions of prominent statesmen like Strafford, and incidents of the Civil War were chronicled in lively style When Sir John Hotham was beheaded on Tower Hill for alleged treason to the Parliament a reporter described him as "seeming very much daunted, and his spirit somewhat fainty" until "his head went clean off at one chop" The execution of Charles I was more decorously recorded The King's jest to "one standing so near the Axe that his cloake touched it" was mentioned "Sir, do you not hurt the Axe, though it may Me", and there was something more than reticence in the observation that the King "presently laid his head over the block, which was at one blow struck off by one in disguise, and taken up by another in disguise also, which he held up, and said nothing"

In his booklet "The Press"—to which I am indebted for some of these particulars—the late Sir Alfred Robbins pointed out that whereas not one English newspaper existed at the accession of Charles I, the press had been begotten and had multiplied to a remarkable degree before his reign of less than 25 years came to an end Still more noteworthy is it that every important feature of modern newspapers should have appeared in these first English journals News, leading articles, advertisements and even pictures found a place in their pages The "Intelligence Departments" of which modern newspapers are proud had their counterparts in news-letter and newspaper offices three centuries ago After the Civil War had begun, war correspondence was

naturally prominent; and there is a peculiarly modern flavour in the fact that specious "war-propaganda" was also employed. It took the form of a bogus newspaper purporting to be issued in the interests of the King but subtly supporting the cause of Parliament. And, most modern touch of all, the editor of a Cavalier newspaper denounced the employment of women reporters by his Puritan rivals whose "daughters write shorthand to furnish out the rayling Conventicle (with reports) hot from the Pulpit". At a time of fierce partisanship these reports, hot from Puritan pulpits, doubtless lacked nothing of vehemence. Nor was there much charity towards adversaries. A newspaper account of the execution of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, ran "On Friday, the little Fireworke of Canterbury was extinguish'd upon Tower Hill. His head was justly taken off. So farewell William of Canterbury".

During the half century between the execution of Charles I and the death of William III the newspapers continued, under conditions frequently adverse, to develop upon what we should call modern lines. More and more space was given to advertisements. Lest contemporary advertisers think themselves ultra-modern it should be said that the advertisements were not less readable than the editorial matter. "Tables of Contents," and even an "Agony Column" were printed. Comic journals made their appearance. The standard of writing steadily improved. Few better specimens of political argument upon public issues are to be found in the annals of English journalism than in the leading articles printed in London at the time of the Popish plot and the (Duke of York) Exclusion Bill between 1668 and 1673. It was in these leading articles that the names of Whig and Tory were given to the two great parties in the State.

Under William III evening papers began to appear. They gave sporting news, the results of horse races, and

the betting odds Proof that the more things change the less they vary is also furnished by newspaper reports that, in those days, stockbrokers caused crowding in the streets by persisting in making prices after the Stock Exchange had closed, and that the driver of a public vehicle, which had knocked down and killed a man, could not be traced because he had driven off so fast that his number could not be taken Of these journals only one still survives—the *London Gazette* It was started while the Court was at Oxford during the Plague in the reign of Charles II as an authorised organ of the Court, and was then called the *Oxford Gazette* After the Great Fire it was transferred to London and appeared twice weekly as the *London Gazette*, publishing news, advertisements, and Court and official announcements The least “modern” feature of journalism in that period was that newspapers sometimes appeared with an empty half page either because there was not enough matter to fill the whole sheet or because the “author” (or editor) felt that the extreme heat justified him in taking a short holiday.

It was not by accident that the first English newspapers took shape between 1640 and 1688, that is to say, during the troubled period covered by the reign of Charles I, the Commonwealth and the reigns of Charles II and James II, for at no time in English history had so many conflicting political ideas and passions filled the public mind, or had the essentials of political freedom been so fiercely debated With the Revolution of 1688, the expulsion of James II and the accession of William and Mary, English political ideas began profoundly to influence the Continent of Europe The movement of thought represented by Locke’s essays on “Toleration” and “Concerning the Human Understanding” led, directly and indirectly, to the “Encyclopædism” which was to culminate in the French Revolution of 1789 after having been responsible, in part, for the terms of the American Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776

This movement of thought might not have spread and flourished without the constant discussion of fundamental principles in English newspapers, nor could newspapers have carried on this discussion with anything approaching freedom unless Parliament had taken in 1695 the significant step which Macaulay has recorded and described

For fifteen years after 1680 the Press had been shackled by the proclamation of Charles II "For Restraining the Printing of News Books and Pamphlets of News without leave" Chief Justice Scroggs had then given the ruling, as the spokesman of twelve fellow judges chosen by King Charles' Court, that it was criminal at Common Law to publish any public news, whether true or false, without the King's licence, and that to "publish any newspaper whatever" was not only illegal but "showed a manifest intent to the breach of the peace" As a consequence the news-letter regained importance since news-books and newspapers were in constant danger of suppression, and their writers of physical punishment and imprisonment For this reason Chief Justice Jeffreys of infamous memory suppressed coffee-houses that dealt in news-letters Even under William III conditions improved little at first, for the doctrine enunciated by Scroggs is one to which men in uncontrolled authority are naturally prone But in 1695 there came, silently and unexpectedly, a stroke which freed the Press from legalised official interference except in time of war. As Macaulay wrote "While the Abbey was hanging with black for the funeral of the Queen (Mary II) the Commons came to a vote, which at the time attracted little attention, which produced no excitement, which has been left unnoticed by voluminous analysts, and of which the history can be but imperfectly traced in the Journals of the House, but which has done more for liberty and for civilisation than the Great Charter or the Bill of Rights Early in the

session a Select Committee had been appointed to ascertain what temporary statutes were about to expire, and to consider which of those statutes it might be expedient to continue. The report was made and all the recommendations in the report were adopted, with one exception. Among the laws which the Committee thought it would be advisable to renew was the law which subjected the Press to a censorship. The question was put, 'that the House do agree with the Committee in the Resolution that the Act entitled an Act for preventing Abuses in printing seditious, treasonable and unlicensed pamphlets, and for regulating all Printing and Printing Presses, be continued.' The Speaker pronounced that the Noes had it, and the Ayes did not think fit to divide."

From that moment the freedom of the Press was legally established in England, and with it a chance for the Press worthily to discharge its functions. Experience of reaction under Charles II and James II had convinced a majority of the House of Commons that the dangers of freedom to print and to comment upon news could not outweigh the public advantages of such freedom. On the whole and despite some setbacks and lapses this conviction has governed English public life ever since.

Within a few weeks of the freeing of the Press from censorship a number of newspapers of a fresher type came into existence and were more frequently published than before. On May 17, 1695, appeared the *Flying Post*, published thrice weekly. It was followed quickly by *The English Courant*, the *Post Boy* and the *Weekly Messenger*, all of which were morning papers. One London paper even appeared three days running without special announcement, but then resumed its tri-weekly course. On Wednesday, March 11, 1702, however, the *Daily Courant* was published. It was the first English daily paper. It announced itself as being

designed to give "all the material news as soon as every post arrives, and it is confined to half the compass to save the public at least half the impertinences of ordinary newspapers" It was issued appropriately at "Fleet Bridge," and it kept its promise well. Marlborough's victories in Flanders had whetted the public appetite for the latest news, and when he crushed the French at Ramillies in May, 1706, the *Daily Courant* printed at night a supplement to its usual morning issue giving intelligence from "An Express arriv'd this Evening" This piece of enterprise prompted a venture in evening journalism Within two months the *Evening Post*, published at "Six at night," came into the field.

The reign of Queen Anne was in many respects the springtime of British journalism Though *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were reviews rather than newspapers, and the *Daily Courant* held its own for years as the one regular morning paper, public interest in printed news and views was vigorous enough to sustain a free Press The *Evening Courant* appeared as a direct competitor to the *Evening Post*, and popular weekly newspapers, as distinct from weekly reviews filled with essays, established themselves Among the editors of and contributors to these journals was Daniel Defoe His *Robinson Crusoe* was serialised in the *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* and ran through 165 issues

Defoe had, indeed, helped to revive printed criticism of public affairs before the Press was exempted from censorship He took his risks open-eyed, and was punished for his temerity by pillory, imprisonment and fine, but he set all public-spirited journalists an excellent example Lest it be too readily followed, Walpole endeavoured in the reign of George I to destroy the freedom of the Press and to corrupt newspapers Though he had demanded for the Press unrestricted liberty as against the Crown and Parliament while he was in opposition, he claimed coercive power for Ministers as

soon as he came into office "The Ministers," he said, "are sufficiently armed with authority. They possess the great sanction of rewards and punishments, the disposal of the privy purse, the grace of pardoning, and the power of condemning to the pillory every seditious writer." Walpole used all these agencies of intimidation and corruption. If he could not stop criticism entirely he succeeded in debasing the Press by evil influences that persisted until the end of the eighteenth century. So usual did it become for journalists and newspaper owners to take Government subsidies that even John Walter I of *The Times* received £300 a year from the Treasury, and when the payment was suspended he demanded its renewal almost as a matter of right. Not until his son, John Walter II, became sole manager of that journal in 1803—and earned his father's displeasure by making it independent both financially and politically—did English journalism begin to breathe a freer air again and freely to criticise the conduct of public affairs.

Few safeguards of public welfare have been more hardly won or need to be more vigilantly preserved than that of "the freedom of the Press." It may be too much to ask of human nature, and of political human nature in particular, that it should welcome criticism or think opposition wholesome. To the ears of men in power praise is grateful, never more grateful than when they are mistaken. Their supporters, and the "vested interests" they may represent, are apt to resent public censure. Journalists themselves find it pleasanter and more profitable to be well-received and well-looked-upon in ministerial circles than to be accused of taking Ishmael as their exemplar. Precisely in the degree in which they thus abdicate their functions as independent wardens of the public mind, they debase the Press and undermine its influence. "Schools of journalism" would do well

to teach their students the history of the century-long struggle for the freedom of the Press, so that they might trace it through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and be on their guard against influences which to-day tend to curtail it. If conditions like those which prevailed in the early years of the reign of George III—when judges were the ready instruments of the Government, and John Wilkes in the *North Briton* stood out against their servile venality—are unlikely to recur, more insidious efforts to shackle or to muzzle the Press may have to be resisted and overcome in the present and the future. John Wilkes seemed to be fighting a lone fight. Yet his championship of public liberties made him the most popular man in the Kingdom. A like spirit was shown by "Junius" in his famous "Letters." Against it a rule of law was invented under George III, and remained nominally in existence until the reign of Queen Victoria, that the publisher of a journal should be criminally liable for any act of an employee without being given an opportunity to exculpate himself. An eminent lawyer, William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, laid down the doctrine that publishers were not entitled to trial by jury—the main pledge of freedom for the Press—and it took a greater contemporary lawyer, in the person of Charles Pratt, Earl of Camden, Lord Chancellor of England, to discredit and controvert this doctrine in 1763. Camden was rightly hailed as one of the "maintainers of English constitutional liberty" at a time when the House of Commons was full of pensioners and place-holders, and sorely needed to be chastened by a free Press. Again and again in the history of English freedom the Press has called Governments and Parliaments to order in the name of the community, and in so far as the Press continues to discharge this duty it will be acting in the spirit of Socrates who declared that "The sun might as easily be spared from the Universe as free speech from the liberal institutions of society."

CHAPTER V

THE PRINTED WORD

THERE is a subtle difference between the persuasive power of the written and of the printed word. Ben Jonson hit upon it when, in the reign of James I, he satirised a London printer, one Nathaniel Butter, in the words "I am a printer, and a printer of news, and I do hearken after 'em wherever they may be. It is the printing of 'em makes 'em news to a great many, who would indeed believe nothing but what's in print."

Nathaniel Butter had so firm a belief in printed as against written news that he took advantage of the permission given by James I to print news "from abroad," and started the earliest systematic publication in England of what he described as "many admirable, strange, joyfull and pitifull accident and passages"—only to find the censor harsh and subscribers few. Though his pioneer spirit outran the conscious needs of the hour, he understood well enough that the public disposition to believe more readily what is printed than what is written or spoken gives the printing press a special sway over men's minds.

The printing of newspapers is now, and has been for more than a century, a branch of the printer's craft distinct from the printing of books. A good part of the story of newspapers lies in this process of differentiation. If the modern newspaper press is a child of mechanics, the mechanisation of printing was a response to a public demand for newspapers. As long as individual metal types had to be selected and arranged by hand in what are known as printers' "sticks," made up

into columns which were inked by hand, and an impression taken from them on sheets of paper laid by hand and placed under flat presses likewise worked by hand, no newspaper could be produced quickly enough or in numbers sufficient to reach more than a small section of the public. Mechanical progress alone allowed the modern newspaper press to evolve, and the story of its evolution is very largely the story of enterprise on the part of *The Times* newspaper.

Up to the middle of last century, at all events, the history of newspaper printing is mainly the history of mechanical developments in the production of *The Times*. Indeed, the special "Printing Number" which that journal published on October 29, 1929, went so far as to claim that "From the year 1784 until the present day all the chief improvements in the printing of newspapers have either been invented or first tried and fostered in what is now the office of *The Times*." Yet the man who started this unexampled story of progress happened upon printing almost by accident. Nor is this bold claim without warrant. There had, of course, been earlier newspapers, properly so-called, than *The Times*. The *Morning Post* was established in 1772, a good thirteen years before *The Times*, while, abroad, weekly and periodical gazettes had been printed since the second and third quarters of the sixteenth century. And long before the history of English newspapers began with the *Weekly Newes*, which Archer and Bourne published in London in 1622, journalistic pens were busy in England. By the end of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries the writings of men as outstanding as Defoe, Swift, Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Addison, Dr Johnson, John Wilkes and "Junius" had made the printing press a power in the land. But it was not until John Walter I cast about for a fresh means of livelihood when his other ventures failed that the idea of rapid printing took shape as a "business proposition."

John Walter then bethought him of a certain printing process in which he had taken some interest a few years earlier. It was known as "logography," and consisted of printing with "logotypes" or combinations of letters. The process itself had been invented by a compositor named Henry Johnson who had devised it for figures, so as to publish every evening a numerical list of blanks and prizes drawn daily in the State lottery. As this could not be done in time by the ordinary methods of composing, Johnson made types of from two to five figures, each of which could be set up as quickly as the type of a single figure. His method succeeded, and Johnson was about to adapt it to the printing of words when John Walter bought his patents and presently started a type foundry. Early in 1784 Walter took the "King's late printing-house near Apothecaries' Hall," which stood on part of the site since occupied by *The Times* office. His strenuous work reduced the 90,000 words in the English language to some 5,000, "by separating the particles and terminations, also removing the technical terms and obsolete expressions." These 5,000 he reduced still further by cutting up the words into syllables, roots, prefixes and terminations, and thus produced a "fount of type" that could be arranged in four compositors' "cases" each measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The object was to enable a compositor to take from his case a combination of as many letters as possible at each movement, and yet not to have so many combinations of letters that time would be lost in finding those that were wanted.

John Walter maintained that in this way the work of composing could be much more quickly done than with single types alone. Whether he was right or wrong, his "logography" never had a fair chance. Jealousy killed it before it could "make good" or fail on its merits. Printers and booksellers resented the intrusion of a man who was not a recognised member of the printing craft,

and they made things hard for him. For a time Walter stuck doggedly to his logotypes, and, since quick printing would obviously be of advantage to a newspaper, he started the *Daily Universal Register*, "printed logographically," on January 1, 1785. How much "logography" was actually used in printing either the *Daily Universal Register*, or *The Times* (as John Walter called his journal from 1788 onwards), is a matter of doubt. Though he printed a pamphlet with logotypes in 1789, his compositors demanded the same pay for setting each logotype as they could have claimed for setting separately the letters which composed it. In any event, logographic printing soon dropped out of use in Walter's printing house, and the words "printed logographically" disappeared from the title page of *The Times*.

To John Walter II, son of John Walter I, belongs the credit of having made the first great advance in the mechanical printing of newspapers. He took sole charge of the paper in 1803 and seems soon to have begun to experiment with a power-driven press. More than ten years later *The Times* announced on November 29, 1814

"Our journal of this day presents to the public the practical result of the greatest improvement connected with printing since the discovery of the art itself. The reader of this paragraph now holds in his hand one of the many thousand impressions of *The Times* newspaper which were taken off last night by a mechanical apparatus .

"Of the person who made this discovery we have but little to add. It must suffice to say that he is a Saxon by birth that his name is Koenig, and that the invention has been executed under the direction of his friend and countryman, Bauer."

"This paragraph" said nothing of the man who had seen the worth of Koenig's invention, John Walter II. Nor did it mention an inventive English author and editor, William Nicholson, who had patented in 1790

a cylinder printing press From Nicholson's patent Koenig may have got some of his notions, though the patent itself was interesting rather than practical. Nicholson's idea was to print from type fixed either on a flat bed or a cylinder, the impression of the type being taken by another cylinder covered with some suitable material, the paper being fed to the machine between the two cylinders, and the ink applied to the type by rollers. A further suggestion by Nicholson that type should be wedge-shaped, smaller at the foot and wider at the top, so as to allow of its being fixed on a cylinder in a way that would present an even printing surface, was not adopted by Koenig It was, however, taken up later by Applegath and others, and it was really the foundation of the practice of printing from rotating cylinders which was in time to dominate newspaper production

Meanwhile Koenig's press used one cylinder, which took an impression from type fixed on a flat bed, the paper being fed between the bed and the cylinder For the first time in the history of printing he used steam power with such effect that his machine in *The Times* office could print between 1,000 and 1,100 copies an hour of the little four-page sheet (20 inches by 32) which was then *The Times* This was four times as many as could be printed by hand Like all newspaper presses then, and until 1865, Koenig's machine could only print one side of the paper, the other side having to be printed by what was called a "perfecting" operation Still, the great revolution had begun

When Koenig had gone back to Germany, John Walter II employed Applegath and Cowper, two English inventors, who, in 1827, produced a new press capable of printing from 4,000 to 5,000 copies an hour In 1848 the same Applegath wrought a further revolution by inventing his first rotary press, which worked entirely on the cylindrical principle With it 10,000 copies of a

four-page *Times* could be printed in an hour. Applegath's "cylinder" was polygonal in form and was surrounded by eight impression cylinders, each one column wide, the paper being fed to the machine between the main and the impression cylinders. Unlike Koenig's cylinder, Applegath's main cylinder stood and rotated vertically, not horizontally, and the flat bed of type was done away with. Two of these Applegath machines were used by *The Times* from 1848 to 1868.

They were superseded by the first Hoe press, an American development of the rotating cylinder principle, which went back to a horizontal cylinder with type firmly fixed upon it. As early as 1845 Robert Hoe and Company, of New York, and afterwards of London, had constructed a "Hoe Type Revolving Machine," with a large round central cylinder that could revolve horizontally at a greater speed than Applegath's polygonal upright cylinder. Thanks to an apparatus for fixing the type firmly on the central cylinder, a whole page could be printed by the Hoe machine whereas Applegath's could only print columns. For some years *The Times* used Hoe machines specially built in England to its order. Each machine could print 20,000 sheets an hour on one side of the paper, or 20,000 sheets printed on both sides by the two machines.

The drawback of these separate operations was obvious, how to overcome it was less plain. Sir Rowland Hill had suggested as far back as 1825 that a press capable of printing both sides of a reel of paper at once would be feasible. Forty years later William A. Bullock, of Philadelphia, found the way. Profiting by the invention of stereotyping which, like the process of printing itself, had developed rapidly between 1845 and 1865, Bullock of Philadelphia used two stereotype plates on cylinders that could print both sides of a page at once. Under the impulse of his invention two other inventors, MacDonald and Calverley, of *The Times*,

developed the Walter Press which *The Times* continued to use until 1895 when it was succeeded by a new Hoe press that could deal with three rolls of paper simultaneously.

These developments had not been due to mechanical ingenuity alone. Once again, necessity was the mother of invention. In 1853 the tax on advertisements had been removed, and in 1855 the newspaper duty of 4d on every printed copy of a newspaper was likewise repealed. When the duty of 3d per pound on paper was also rescinded in 1861, the demand for newspapers increased by leaps and bounds. Then, as now, price was a determining factor in newspaper circulation. In 1865 the number of copies printed by London newspapers alone was six times as large as the total circulation of all papers in the United Kingdom had been twenty-five years earlier. The repeal of the taxes made a penny paper commercially profitable and opened the door to a new style of journalism in which the *Daily Telegraph* was the pioneer.

Nevertheless, *The Times*—which had reduced its price from 5d to 4d a copy when the advertisement duty was taken off in 1853, and decreased it by another penny in 1861 after the repeal of the paper duty—continued at the price of 3d to be a pioneer in mechanical printing. It took advantage of experiments which had been going on in France and England in the making of stereotypes, and of the use of stereotype plates by the Bullock Press of Philadelphia, to develop the Walter Press which placed it again at the head of British newspaper printing.

Here a word should be said of stereotyping. The technical names that are still used for some of the operations in the process suggest that the process itself was mainly French. Upon a flat bed or page of type, tightly screwed in a steel "chase" or *chasse*, and thus transformed into a "forme," a sheet of thick wet

papier-mâché was placed. The English term for this sheet is "flong" (a corruption of the French word *flan*). Above the "flong" a thick sheet of rubber and one or more layers of woollen blanket were laid, and the "forme" thus covered was pushed under a "mangle" or rolling machine which, under high pressure, caused the face of the type to make a deep impression in the "flong". So that the papier-mâché of the flong might retain this impression, the "forme," with the flong still in position upon it, and a couple of soft, drying blankets on top, was next fixed under a steam-heated press, where it remained until the moisture had been squeezed and baked out of the flong. This operation converted the flong into a flexible sheet of hard dry cardboard with the page of a newspaper positively impressed upon it. With its change of consistency it changed its name and was called a "matrix."

Trimmed to the right size and suitably prepared, the "matrix" was next bent to semi-circular form and fixed in a mould or casting box, into which molten printing metal could be run. This metal—an alloy of lead, tin and antimony—set rapidly and took an exact negative impression of the curved "matrix." Cooled, trimmed, bevelled and shaved, this semi-circular plate of metal was then fixed upon one half of a horizontal steel cylinder on the printing press. Another semi-circular plate, bearing the impress of another page, would then "clothe" the other half of the cylinder. Between the cylinders of the printing press ran an endless web of paper so arranged that each side of it could be printed simultaneously and positively by the revolving cylinders.

It was the invention of this method of casting curved metal plates from flat beds or pages of type that enabled Bullock of Philadelphia to print on both sides of a page with two stereotypes on cylinders, and also permitted MacDonald and Calverley of *The Times* to develop the Walter press. The Walter press had two horizontal

cylinders carrying stereoplates cast from pages of type, and two impression cylinders covered with blanket. The paper, unwound from a continuous roll on a spindle, was passed over a tension roller, then over damping cylinders which wetted it on both sides, and so to the printing cylinders. On its passage between the upper or printing cylinders and the impression cylinders it was printed on one side, then it passed between the other pair of cylinders and was printed on the other side. Next, cutting cylinders divided it into completely printed newspapers, which were delivered from the machine unfolded and had to be folded by hand. Mechanism for folding, first used at Liverpool, was added to the Walter press in 1885.

But newspapers were swiftly increasing the number of their pages. The increase meant either more printing presses fed by single rolls of paper, or combinations of several machines so as to take more rolls of paper. The Hoe three-roll press, with two rolls of paper at one end and one at the other, was such a combination. With it the Walter press could not keep pace. By 1908, when Lord Northcliffe installed perfected Hoe and Goss presses in *The Times* office, these machines had been developed to the point of printing a 32-page paper at the rate of 25,000 copies an hour each. Since then mechanical progress has been continuous.

The rotary presses now in use are, indeed, miracles of ingenuity. They carry out the operations of damping the paper (when necessary), feeding it to the cylinders, printing it on both sides, cutting, folding, pasting and wrapping (when required) and counting. They are built in "decks" and utilise four or more reels of paper either in single width (two pages wide) or double width (four pages wide). When presses are built in double width a four-reel machine is known as an "octuple" and a three-reel machine as a "sextuple." Double-sextuple and double-octuple machines are also built to take six and eight reels

of double-width paper respectively. The latest Hoe machines installed in *The Times* office during the autumn of 1937, and brought into use on December 2, are each 122 feet long and as high as a small house. They can impress reels of paper at the rate of 20,000 cylinder revolutions an hour. Every unit prints two sections of eight pages each in one revolution of the cylinders, and each of the nine folders can turn out 40,000 copies of *The Times* in an hour or 360,000 copies altogether.

These intricate monsters are mounted on massive cast-iron frames to carry automatic reel stands which change the reels of paper without stopping. The weight of a reel is three-quarters of a ton and the paper on it is about five miles long. When the reel-stands are fully loaded, ninety reels can be either in use or in readiness for use. Thus twenty-four printed sheets, three-thousandths of an inch thick, are cut, folded and delivered at the rate of eleven a second. The motive power is electricity.

All this speeding-up of the printing process might have been of little avail if the type from which stereoplates are cast had continued to be set up slowly by hand. As John Walter I saw, the urgent need of newspapers was for quicker setting. His "logographs" were an effort to meet the need. They failed, and though an early attempt to set type by machinery seems to have been made in England about 1822, nearly fifty years were to pass before any such machine came into practical use.

Indeed, progress in the composition of type was remarkably slow. From the invention of movable metal types in the fifteenth century to the development, in *The Times* office between 1868 and 1879, of a type-setting machine invented by a German named Kastenbein, no method had been discovered of setting type more satisfactorily than it could be set by hand.

The difficulty was inherent in the nature of type-

setting The earliest printers made their own types, but modern printers have recourse to a type founder. The first step in the making of type was to cut a letter at the end of a piece of fine steel which was afterwards hardened to form a punch, a separate punch being required for each character in every class or "fount" of type. Great care and delicacy are needed in making the "faces" of these punches so that every letter in the various sorts of a "fount" may be uniform in width, height and general proportion. When the punch has been passed as perfect it is driven into a piece of polished copper which goes to a "justifier," who sees that the width and height of the "faces" thus impressed are uniform and exactly in line with each other. The copper, duly punched, is called a "drive" or "strike," and when completed the "strike" is called the matrix in which the face of the type is moulded.

Until well into the nineteenth century types were cast from these matrices in small hand-moulds from which a skilful worker could produce about 400 letters an hour. The mould consisted of two parts fitting closely to each other and containing the matrix together with a space long enough to take the metal for the shank of the type. The shank is as important as the face of the type itself and, like almost every detail in the craft of printing, it bears a number of technical names. Each shank must be perfectly rectangular or it is useless. One side and the bottom of each are grooved, the groove or nick on the side enabling a compositor to recognise whether the type is the right way up. Without the groove, hand-setting of type would be twice as slow as it actually is.

When a foundry has supplied printers with a "fount" of type, the types are placed in shallow trays called "cases." For this reason the type-setting department of a newspaper is often called the "case room." These cases are divided into compartments or boxes in each

of which some particular sort of type or letter is placed. The cases themselves stand on sloping desks, the upper case usually containing capital letters and the lower case ordinary letters. The boxes of the upper case are of equal size, but the lower case has fifty-three boxes of various sizes according to the letters which are most frequently used. The box for the letter "e," for instance, is the largest in the lower case. As a compositor seldom takes out from the boxes fewer than 1,500 letters an hour, it is important that the boxes should be as exactly proportioned as possible to the number of letters or types they have to contain.

When taken from the cases the types are arranged in lines, that is to say, "composed" or "set up," in an instrument called a "composing stick," usually made of metal. In the middle of the "stick" is a slide so that the lines can be of various lengths. The compositor fixes the "copy," or manuscript, which he has to set up in a convenient place before his eye. Holding the composing stick in his left hand, he chooses the letters with the thumb and first finger of the right hand, arranges them in the composing stick letter by letter, with a "setting-rule," or thin strip of brass or steel, between each line. A part of his task is so to space the letters that they will fill a line as exactly as possible, "spaces," or simple shanks without faces, being placed between the types and between the separate words for this purpose. This operation is called "justifying."

When the lines of type are placed close together they are said to be "solid," but if greater prominence or clearness is desired in the printed text, strips of metal called "leads," though really "brasses," are placed between each line. The type is then said to be "leaded." When the composing stick has been filled its contents are transferred to a shallow tray of wood or metal, called a "galley," long enough to hold several stickfuls of type and so arranged that the face of the type can be inked

by a roller, and a "pull" or "galley proof" taken from it in order that a printer's "reader" may see what "printer's errors" have crept into the composition. After a first correction of these "galley" proofs, "corrected proofs" are "pulled" for distribution to the editorial departments in a newspaper office which they concern.

It will have been noted that in the processes of type-founding and type-setting the face of the type is twice reversed. On the punch the letter is cut in reverse so that the impression it makes upon the copper "strike," which forms the bottom of the type-mould, may be positive. The type cast from the mould is again negative or in reverse, and the "pull" or proof taken from it when set up is once more positive. Compositors are trained to read type in reverse so that they may easily detect an error. The rapidity with which they can read long blocks of type in reverse seems miraculous to the unskilled eye.

These technical details may help to explain the difficulty of inventing a machine to do swiftly what compositors had for centuries done slowly by hand. Inventors of type-setting machines first tried to "assemble," or compose, mechanical types already cast by type foundry. Their attempts failed or, at least, were not commercially warranted because of the difficulty of "justifying" to even lengths the lines of type mechanically composed. Several machines that could compose single types were, indeed, devised, but the time needed to "justify" their work by hand, and to "distribute" the used types again, rendered the process too slow and too costly. So inventors presently took up the revolutionary idea of making machines capable of composing matrices from which complete lines of type could be cast in one piece or strip of printing metal, called a "slug." But this method, too, had its drawbacks. So far as straightforward composing went, the new idea was

successful. It meant that a daily newspaper could be composed in a short time by a few "slug" machines instead of a large number of compositors working with large stocks of types. A drawback was that while speed and economy were gained, quality of printing was lost. The number of "printer's errors" increased and, since the correction of every error meant the re-casting of a whole line, and often of several lines if the correction altered the space taken up by other letters or words, "slug" machines turned out to be less economical in practice than in theory. Some newspapers tried to get over this difficulty by ignoring minor errors—with the result that newspapers composed only by slug machines were worse printed and contained more mistakes than the old hand-set newspapers. Besides, no means could be found to cast a "slug line" with the precision and uniform height of movable type, no way of making sure that fresh errors would not creep into a new slug line, not to speak of the risk that the whole of a corrected slug line would be inserted in the body of type at the wrong place or the wrong way up.

These drawbacks were not foreseen when Kastenbein was encouraged in *The Times* office to perfect his type-setting machine. It was of the pre-slug sort. Its principle was to have a magazine of separate types from which each type could be released, as required, by the pressure of a finger-key and put in its right place in the line that was being composed. It could set 290 lines of *The Times*, consisting of nearly 17,000 separate types, in an hour. But the types thus set had to be "distributed" after use, that is to say, returned to their proper places in the magazine of Kastenbein's machine. Several attempts were made to do this mechanically until it was found that the quickest and surest way to distribute type was to put it into the melting pot and to cast it afresh after each printing. Frederick Wicks, a member of the editorial staff of *The Times*, invented a rotary

machine for type-casting which made it possible to melt down and re-cast all the type that had been used in printing an issue of *The Times*. So the Kastenbein type-setting machine, in combination with the Wicks machine for casting, supplied *The Times* with fresh type for every issue of the paper until the more modern composing machines, known as the "Monotype," the "Linotype" and the "Inter-type" were introduced in the first decade of this century.

The invention of these machines was due in part to the impulse which the Walter family had given to the mechanical development of printing. And one reason why *The Times* was so often a pioneer in this respect may have been that until well into the third quarter of the nineteenth century its circulation, even at the price of 3d, was much larger than that of any other morning paper. Thus it had a direct interest in turning out its "imprint," or total number of printed copies, as swiftly as possible. Even when its circulation was only 20,000, the difficulty of printing it had been so great that the single four-page sheets of which *The Times* then consisted could not be completely printed off until the late afternoon of the day of issue. Though several rival papers had been founded in the second quarter of the nineteenth century—the *Standard*, in 1827, and the *Daily News*, in 1845—*The Times* remained in a class by itself. In 1855 it had a daily circulation of some 50,000 copies, whereas no other paper printed even 7,500 copies, and several failed to reach half that number. Even in 1866 the circulation of *The Times* was 66,000 copies at 3d, and was far higher than that of the *Daily Telegraph*, which was making its way among the middle class at the price of only one penny.

The *Daily Telegraph* had been founded in 1855 upon the removal of the newspaper stamp duty. It was sold at 2d, and failed within three months. Then it was taken over by Mr J. Moses Levy, a printer, in settlement

of an unpaid printing bill. Besides being a practical printer, Mr. Levy was a newspaper man of genius. He converted the single sheet of the original *Daily Telegraph* into a four page paper and sold it at 1d. Perhaps he understood that the attraction of cheapness would end by being irresistible to a public apt to care less for the quality of the newspapers it buys than for the price it pays for them. Though the *Daily Telegraph* was not the first penny paper in England, it was the first penny paper in London. It addressed itself deliberately to the middle class—to a public less critical than that for which the Press had so far catered. Its success was immediate, both in circulation and in advertising revenue. It took away from *The Times*, which contemptuously scorned its competition, a large proportion of small “classified” advertisements, and drew from them a substantial proportion of its income. Little by little the *Daily Telegraph* encroached also upon the circulation of *The Times*. Not only was the discrepancy between 3d. and 1d. too wide for the newspaper-reading public long to ignore, but both Mr. Levy and his son (the first Lord Burnham) were shrewd enough to gather round their paper a brilliant staff of writers under an editor and man of letters so distinguished as Edwin Arnold. To the attraction of cheapness they began to add the virtue of quality. Nor did they shrink from heavy outlay on original news. Free from the temptation into which *The Times* had fallen—to look upon itself as a “national institution” and therefore to treat “lesser breeds” of journals with contempt—the *Daily Telegraph* gradually surpassed *The Times* in circulation and, though its political influence was smaller, gained for itself a national and international reputation.

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The Times nevertheless retained its technical pre-eminence in printing and its high literary standards.

During the period from 1908 until 1922, Lord Northcliffe supplied the impulse which the Walters had so often given it. By 1908 composing machines known as "linotypes," with their attendant drawbacks, had come into use in many newspaper offices. These drawbacks had led an American inventor, Talbert Lanston, of Washington, to devise a "monotype" composing machine upon entirely new principles. He separated the process of composing from that of casting the type. He improved the spacing between the individual letters and avoided the "slug line." The keyboard of his "monotype" machine perforated a roll of paper much in the way that a pianola record is perforated, each hole corresponding to one letter or sign. The perforated rolls of paper were then transferred to a separate electric casting-machine, which cast one type or sign according to each hole in the paper and with perfect precision of height and width. The electric caster automatically placed each type in its proper place and separately, so that corrections could be made by hand and the quality of the printing could be restored to the highest standards of the hand-setting era. An automatic monotype caster could cast as many as 160 types a minute—rather fewer than the letters in a linotype "slug," but far better work.

This competition compelled the inventors of the "linotype" and other machines to improve their models and the range of types cast. Another machine, called the "Inter-type," was based on the "slug" principle but built with standardised parts so that improvements could be fitted to any original machine, and the range and versatility of the machine itself be greatly increased. Consequently, many important newspapers now use linotypes and intertypes as well as a number of monotypes. The two former are employed for rapid composition, and monotypes for work that can be more slowly done or in which corrections are likely to be

THE PRINTED WORD

needed In *The Times* office, for instance, one-third of the machines are monotypes and two-thirds are "slugs". A small proportion of special matter is still set by hand.

Yet it must not be supposed that good newspaper printing is now merely a question of care and ingenuity in the making and the choice of machines. The men behind the machines still have their part to play. Some years ago the late Mr. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, proprietor of the *Saturday Evening Post* and of the *Public Ledger* of Philadelphia, asked permission to inspect the printing establishment of *The Times*. He wished to solve a problem that was puzzling him. He could not understand how *The Times* achieved what he called its "fine, smooth printing". His own *Saturday Evening Post*, with a circulation of 3,000,000 copies weekly, was among the best printed magazines in the world, and it was equipped with the latest machinery of all kinds.

In *The Times* office Mr. Curtis saw nothing new in the way of machinery. So, after inspecting all the processes, he was still puzzled. He asked the head printer of *The Times* if there were any secret he had not been shown. The head printer answered: "We never allow a type-setting machine or an electric caster to get out of order. As soon as the slightest irregularity is detected, the machine is taken out of service and overhauled. We never let a machine, or any part of it, run down or become so worn that its work is inferior and the only way out is to 'scrap' it."

Mr. Curtis recognised that this might be the secret he was seeking, though he doubted whether American newspaper offices would depart from the usual American practice of working machines to death and then replacing them by new machines. Just as there was artistry in the old hand-printing, so there may be artistry in the care for machines, which respond to and "pay for" considerate handling. Wherever printing of high quality is found in newspapers or magazines, its excellence may be

attributable as much to the care given to the machines as to the machines themselves

But what of the type used in the printing of newspapers? Does it differ essentially from the type used for printing books? While the history of printing was for centuries that of letter-cutting and type-founding for books, the history of newspaper printing is mainly that of mechanical development. Yet the types used in newspapers have a history of their own, and they bear names unfamiliar to the newspaper-reading public. How many readers of Kipling's verse feel the bite of four lines in his poem, "The Files," or understand the satire they pour upon departed worthies who may have thought themselves, or been thought, worthy of big type in the newspaper reports at one moment, only to dwindle to the indignity of small type, set "solid" at the bottom of a page, upon their demise. Kipling warns "All coming Robert Brownings and Carlyles" that it will interest them to "hunt among the files" of newspapers and to—

Trace each all-forgot career
From long primer through brevier
Unto Death, a para minion in the Files
(Para minion—solid—bottom of the Files)

"Long primer" is the largest ordinary type used by a newspaper like *The Times*. "Brevier" is an intermediate size between "long primer" and "minion," the latter being the smallest currently used in the composition of newspapers. A "para minion—solid" is a paragraph set in small type without the "leads," or spaces between the lines, that give it prominence.

Each of these names has its own story, and the names persist though other systems of classifying type have been introduced by modern printers. The principal of the ordinary British and American types are known in

order of size as "Great primer," "English," "Pica," "Small pica," "Long primer," "Bourgeois" (pronounced "burjoice"), "Brevier," "Minion," "Nonpareil," "Ruby" and "Pearl"

But not all types of the same name are of the same size. The long primer of one type-founder might, for instance, fill only 89 lines to the foot of type while that of another would fill 92. To meet this difficulty American type-founders agreed upon a "point-system," which they hoped would be uniform. Taking the shanks of six pica letters as filling a space of 0.996 inches, they divided this space into 12 parts or points, other types being cast as multiples of one of these points and specified according to the number of them they contained. In this way pica was specified as a "12-point" type, long primer as "10-point," minion as "7-point" and pearl (the smallest) as "5-point." At the other end of the scale type sizes ran up to 72-point and, for capital letters, to 84-point. But even this system failed to secure complete uniformity. Since the "points" are measured from the shanks, or "bodies," not from the face or letters of the types, the 10-point or 12-point face of one "fount" of type will differ considerably in width and height from 10-point or 12-point of another fount. So uniformity still eludes the type-founders, and while they may prefer to use these newer designations of type, I fancy it will be long before the older and more picturesque names go entirely out of use in newspaper offices.

The earliest English newspapers were printed in what was known as "old-face" type, which the English type-cutter, Caslon, had adapted from type cut by a Frenchman named Garamond in the sixteenth century. The *Morning Post* was printed in "old-face" when it first appeared on November 2, 1722, as was *The Times* under its original name of *The Daily Universal Register* on January 1, 1785. Two years later another journal called *The World, or Fashionable Gazette* was printed

in "modern-face" type under the direction of John Bell at the British Library in the Strand. Bell's interest in printing had been quickened by a visit to Paris in 1785, where he studied the types used in the leading printing offices, and took delight in the designs produced in 1702 by another Frenchman named Grandjean. By 1780 the finest Paris printers had adopted these designs and, on his return to England, John Bell set up a type foundry and adapted them to English use with Richard Austin as his punch-cutter. Together they produced the first English "modern-face."

The cutting of this fount of type was remarkably good. Notwithstanding its French inspiration it looked English, and it made a sensation among printers when it was used in the title of Bell's edition of Pope, and especially in *The World, or Fashionable Gazette*. Though John Walter I of *The Times* opposed its use, his paper soon began to bring its own "old-face" type nearer to Bell's "modern-face," and on November 9, 1799, *The Times* "went modern" throughout. Though the *Morning Post* continued to use "old-face" for nearly five years longer, it ended by capitulating, and soon the whole newspaper Press as well as the book-printing craft also "went modern." Slight changes and improvements were presently introduced by William Miller, of Edinburgh, who established in 1809 the first type foundry to be devoted entirely to "modern-face," and further changes have gradually come about in order to increase the legibility of newspaper print.

Thus the printing of English newspapers has developed on English lines despite the foreign designs which English type-cutters took as their models. It is a curious fact that England never led the way in type-designing. Until 1509 the prevailing English type was the Gothic black-letter, a variety of the formal Gothic type, called "Textur," which prevailed in Germany, and black-letter continued to be usual for some thirty years after 1509,

when the earliest Roman type appeared in England. If it be asked why black-letter did not survive in this country, and become standard for books and newspapers as the ornamented variety of Gothic, called "Fraktur," did in Germany, the answer may be that many of the leading printers in England were foreigners who did not feel bound to uphold any English standard or tradition. At all events, these foreign printers in England followed French models and soon adopted the Roman letter to the exclusion of almost every other letter. The Germans, on the other hand, clung to the Gothic letter because it had been used by Gutenberg and other early German printers. So to-day we find most German newspapers printed in Gothic "Fraktur"—to the serious disadvantage of German eyesight—and a battle still going on between it and the Roman letter which, together with italic lettering, was favoured by many of the Humanists during the classical Renaissance. Indeed, italic was once an independent letter with a genealogy of its own as old as, and in some ways more interesting than, that of Roman. It is a cursive or running variety of the Humanistic script originally adopted by the Papal Chancery for Papal briefs. In France, where italic is much favoured by poets, it still plays an important part. In England, on the contrary, all that printers ask is that an italic fount shall harmonise with the Roman when it is used for the sake of emphasis or in quotations from foreign languages.

The earliest printers, whose aim it was to reproduce by metal types something that should closely resemble the manuscript or hand-written book, can hardly have foreseen the revolution which their new craft would bring about in the means of spreading knowledge and ideas. They did not design letters anew, they imitated in type the penmanship of the scribes. Though the early Humanists of the Renaissance broke away from the

models of penmen and reverted to classical letters, neither they nor the designers and cutters of type felt the impulse that ended by producing the newspaper press—the urge for speed. As I have sought to show, the history of the newspaper press is largely an attempt to gain time, to overcome the slowness of hand-printing, and to place before an ever-widening public of newspaper buyers the latest news printed on the largest number of copies with the least possible delay. Whether the human mind has been enriched or fortified by these developments may be an open question. It is in any event an academic question, since a modern world without newspapers would be hard to imagine. But the part which the newspaper press should play in the life of the community is still a matter of great moment, all the more because the intricacy and the cost of the machines and organisations now needed to produce and to sell newspapers have ended by creating a “newspaper industry” which may not have at heart the public weal as distinguished from the prosperity of its “vested interests.” Under these conditions the freedom of the Press takes on an aspect somewhat different from that which it wore before the development of mechanical printing began to change the struggling news-sheets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into the wealthy and widely circulated journals of to-day.

CHAPTER VI

CIRCULATION AND ADVERTISING

It used to be thought that the circulation of a newspaper showed how much interest the public took in its contents, and that its sales were a fair measure of its influence. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century this was broadly true. Even at the price of 3d the circulation of *The Times* reached nearly 70,000 copies daily during the Crimean War, and stood at well over 60,000 for the next twenty years. For a long time it held its own, even in the number of its readers, against the *Daily Telegraph* and other penny papers; though, as time went on, the latter gained far higher circulations. But these older standards lost much of their validity when Alfred Harmsworth started a newspaper revolution with his *Daily Mail* in 1896, and when, some years later, a Sunday newspaper like the *News of the World* managed to sell 3,000,000 copies of each issue. In the first decade of this century the circulation of *The Times* had dropped below 40,000. Yet its influence remained far greater than that of the *Daily Mail*, which sold ten or twenty times as many copies. So there was obviously something wrong with the assumption that influence could be measured by the yardstick of quantity.

There was something amiss, too, with the supposition that the biggest circulations would always bring the largest revenues from advertisers. The power of a newspaper to sell the goods it advertises must depend, to some extent, upon the buying power of its readers.

A newspaper with a smaller circulation among a superior "quality" of readers can command higher advertisement rates per thousand copies than a newspaper more widely read by a poorer public. But when, as in the case of the *Daily Mail*, a widely-read paper appealed to a public with money to spend, quantity as well as quality of circulation began to count, and the value of its advertisement columns went up by leaps and bounds.

Revenue from advertisements has long been the mainstay of newspaper enterprise in Great Britain. Up to a point this position is healthier than that in some other countries where revenue from sales of newspapers barely covers the cost of producing them, and the temptation to accept secret subsidies from official, industrial, financial or even foreign sources is too strong to be resisted. The proportion of revenue which British newspapers draw from sales, as compared with their income from advertisements, varies from paper to paper and may be hard to determine precisely even when balance-sheets are made up. Some published balance-sheets put revenue from sales at one-half or more of total income, others at about two-fifths. But I know of instances in which sales covered scarcely one-third of the cost of producing a newspaper and left the other two-thirds to be met out of advertisement revenue, not to mention any profit that might be made.

In an estimated budget of a popular twenty-page newspaper with a daily circulation of 2,000,000 copies (given in the "Report on the British Press" by the "Political and Economic Planning" Group) the total outlay of the paper is put at £3,000,000, and total revenue at £3,400,000. On the revenue side the income from advertisements is entered as £1,800,000, and receipts from sales as £1,600,000. On this showing, receipts from sales would cover more than half the annual outlay. But the estimated budget also includes

an expenditure of £300,000 on "Canvassing and Publicity," besides £100,000 for "Readers' Insurance." So the £1,600,000 revenue from sales looks like gross income against which the cost of canvassing and publicity and of readers' insurance ought to be set. This would bring net income from sales down to £1,200,000, or 40 per cent of the total outlay—a proportion which, I should imagine, is rarely exceeded in the actual budgets of any British newspaper. Advertisement revenue has therefore to cover the other 60 per cent of outlay and to provide whatever profit there may be. The importance of a big income from advertisements is evident.

By trying to establish an arithmetical relationship between the sales of a newspaper and its advertisement charges Alfred Harmsworth (or Lord Northcliffe) began a revolution in the British Press. Like those of other revolutions, its effects have not been uniformly good. As the circulation of his *Daily Mail* crept up and its charges for advertising space mounted close behind them, his mind was beglamoured by the thought that a huge circulation would connote an increase of his influence even more than of his wealth. At last the proud day arrived when he could plaster the hoardings of London and the walls of houses with the jingling rhyme "Daily Mail—Million Sale." And as the total of sold copies continued to increase—thanks in part to the perfection of his distributing organisation and in part to journalistically unworthy devices such as the insurance of "registered readers" against accidents or death—and to approach a total of two millions, he cancelled the "Million Sale" in the fond expectation that the prouder "slogan"—"Two Million Sale"—would soon replace it.

But neither he nor his brother and successor, Lord Rothermere, ever saw the *Daily Mail* reach the two-million mark. This achievement, and whatever quantitative glory may surround it, was reserved for Lord

Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*, and for the "Labour" *Daily Herald* under the management of Odhams. In the effort to put his competitors in the shade Northcliffe had, however, taken a step which, in my view, has done great harm to the British Press. Insisting that advertisers are entitled to full value for their money, and ought to be sure that they get the degree of publicity they pay for, Northcliffe published chartered accountants' certificates of the number of copies effectively sold by the *Daily Mail* and his other journals. In this way he sought to compel his rivals likewise to publish their "net sales certificates" on pain of incurring suspicion that they were charging higher advertisement rates than their circulations warranted.

This looked like "honesty in business" of the best sort, and such Northcliffe may have thought it. But as human motives are not always simple, his action may also have been inspired by a desire to "show up" his rivals and to prove himself the real friend of advertisers, an increase of whose custom would reward his probity. Had he foreseen some of the consequences of his "net sales certificates" campaign, or had he lived to observe them, he might have seen how dubious they were and have tried to mitigate them. None knew better than he that an advertisement-ridden Press cannot be a free Press. He was convinced that the Press, if it wished to preserve its own independence, must keep advertisers in their proper places as salesmen, and not allow them to dictate policy or even to vulgarise the appearance of a newspaper by glaring "display" advertisements. He failed to see that the mania for "net sales certificates" would end by giving large buyers of newspaper publicity the whip-hand of journalism and by making the Press a handmaid of "big business."

On this matter of "net sales certificates" some plain speaking is needed. Advertising is reputedly a "business

proposition," a commercial transaction pure and simple. A newspaper offers so much space in such and such a position to manufacturers or agents with goods to sell, and undertakes to bring the advertisement of their goods before the eyes of its readers. Since newspapers depend upon their advertisement revenue to make ends meet and to earn a profit, does it not follow that it is only just and fair that the men or the agencies who buy newspaper publicity should be sure of getting in full measure what they pay for? Within limits it does follow, though the limits should be carefully drawn and firmly insisted upon. Advertisers need the Press as much as the Press needs them, and indiscriminating insistence on their part upon "net sales certificates" may tend to deprive them of the very guarantee they look for. Besides, the quantitative concept of publicity-value leads advertisers and their agents to withhold advertisements from high-class publications with limited circulations and thus to cripple or to strangle some of the best organs of the Press. For this reason, among others, the mortality among high-class periodicals of educative value in this country has in recent years been especially heavy.

One result of Northcliffe's "net sales certificates" agitation was, indeed, to make numerical circulation the main criterion of publicity-value. If the highest advertisement rates were paid to newspapers with the biggest circulations, if the *Daily Mail* was able, at one period, to charge £1,400 a day for its front page and to have a long "waiting list" of candidates for its space at that figure, would not its rivals be driven so to increase their circulation by hook or by crook that they, too, might get a share of the golden harvest?

This is precisely what happened. Advertisers and their agents began to demand net sales certificates as indispensable passports to their favour. So "popular" newspapers offered insurance benefits and "free gifts"

to "registered readers," and employed canvassers to bribe housewives and other prospective readers in a dozen ways if they would only promise to "take the paper" for a stated period. Some of these tricks ended by depriving advertisers of the degree of publicity for which they paid—since many "registered readers" never looked at a copy of the paper which offered them insurance benefits while others bought five or six copies in the hope of getting prizes for cross-word puzzles or for the sake of "competition coupons." In these and other ways advertisers and their agents have lacked both business gumption and public spirit.

The business of advertising has now been placed on an arithmetical footing and is governed by a number of established rules. Advertisers are asked to pay so and so much per column-inch of space per thousand readers according to the position of the column on a newspaper page and of the prominence of the page itself. These column-inch rates range from £3 in *The Times* to £6 10s in the *Daily Express*. Special rates may be quoted for certain positions and for whole or half pages, a half-page "above the fold" being more valuable than the same space "below the fold." A full page may fetch anything from £400 to £1,000. The front page of the *Daily Mail* is still priced at £1,400, as it is the only front page in a London daily paper that is available for "display" advertisements. How long the *Daily Mail* will be able to command this price remains to be seen. It is no longer clamouring for the publication of "net sales certificates", and though short-term fluctuations in sales do not induce newspapers to alter their advertisement rates, advertisers have been taught by Northcliffe's "net sales" campaign to grow restive when they suspect that any steady drop in circulation is being hidden from them. In this event a newspaper may allow advertisers a "special cut rate."

without altering their nominal charge "Cut rates" are also common for long-term contracts and for big amounts of advertising Drapery-store advertisements are published at lower than standard rates because they have "news value" for women and tend by themselves to increase circulation It is a safe guess that most newspapers sell their advertising space at a discount of not less than 25 per cent on their standard rates

The column-inch rate works out in different ways according to the class of readers who are expected to read an advertisement The *Daily Express*, as I have said, charges £6 10s per column-inch and *The Times* only £3 But, on the "column-inch per 1,000 readers" basis, *The Times* with its circulation of some 200,000 copies is seen to charge proportionately a much higher rate than the *Daily Express* which boasts a circulation of 2,400,000 The *Daily Telegraph* charges £5 per column-inch for a circulation of over 650,000 The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Herald* each charge £6 per column-inch, though the former sells hardly more than 1,500,000 copies while the latter sells 2,000,000 The explanation of these differences lies in the estimated purchasing power of readers

Advertisers and their agents are often gullible folk They think, for example, that a popular paper with a certificate showing a "net sale" of 1,000,000 copies is a much more valuable medium of publicity than another which sells only 950,000 And when by dint of "insurance benefits," "free gifts," "competition coupons," canvassing and what not, a paper reaches the 2,000,000 mark, advertisers are deeply impressed They seem unwilling to admit, even to themselves, that advertising is a gamble in public psychology and that there is no such thing as mathematical or even arithmetical certainty about it

As "business men," advertisement agents and their

clients may shrug their shoulders at the part "net sales certificates" and the mania for "million sales" have played in lowering the level of the Press. Are they their brothers' keepers? What they want is that advertisements should "pull," that is to say, should bring about a recognised and recognisable increase in the sale of the wares advertised. If the front page of the *Daily Mail* "pulls" better than the advertisement pages of its rivals the reason must be that it appeals to a public which is in the habit of reading advertisements besides possessing the wherewithal to buy the goods advertised. Nor, these business men may argue, ought they to be censured for refusing to give a fair share of their patronage to high class or "high brow" periodicals of educative worth, for not only is the circulation of such periodicals infinitesimal in comparison with that of publications with a million or more "registered readers," but the people who are educated or intelligent enough to enjoy reading "high-brow" stuff are less likely than others to look at advertisements or to be persuaded by them to buy the articles advertised. After all, business is business. If blame there be, should it not be put upon the public, where it belongs?

Advertisers and their agents must be supposed to know their own business best. Yet some experience of them has suggested doubt even on this score to my irreverent mind. One of their practices is to "key" advertisements in the hope of finding out what sales have actually been prompted by advertisements in this or that publication. The assumption, which may be largely fantastic, is that buyers who are influenced by an advertisement will write or say that they have seen it in this or that newspaper. A small proportion of buyers may do so. A far higher proportion never do anything of the kind. Besides, the "key" system ignores a simple psychological rule in which the adver-

tisers on large public hoardings place their trust This rule is the cumulative effect of repeated suggestion, pictorial or verbal Large advertisers are well aware that when this kind of suggestion ceases for a time their sales tend to fall off In the nature of things they cannot know with any degree of precision which of the media through which the suggestion has been conveyed is the most effective They gamble on a theory of probabilities Obviously, when their suggestions are conveyed to the public by "display" advertisements in widely-circulated newspapers, the chances of getting a tangible result are increased Yet, here again, it is necessary to distinguish between the number of people who read a paper or who scan its advertisements and the numbers vouched for in "net sales certificates"

Most newspapers are seen or read by more than one person The higher-class newspapers, whose actual sales may be barely a tenth of those claimed by the biggest "popular" journals, probably pass through many more hands than do the "popular" sheets A single copy of *The Times*, for instance, is likely to be read or seen by many more people than a single copy of the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Express* *The Times* has therefore a "quality" circulation both numerically and intellectually To a more limited extent the same may be true of other papers of the higher class such as the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Glasgow Herald* It was certainly true also of the defunct *Morning Post*, though if advertisers had appreciated this fact the *Morning Post* might have survived In a much fuller degree it is true of educative periodicals which seek to "do their bit" in the general work of public enlightenment Of one such periodical with a circulation far above that of any comparable publication I can speak with knowledge Though a net sales certificate would have shown

its numerical circulation to be in the neighbourhood of 10,000 copies, each copy was read by an average of ten persons, and some copies passed through as many as 300 hands. Libraries and institutions which tried to keep a file of it invariably found it thumbed and read to tatters before the next issue could appear. Yet by no means of persuasion could advertisers or advertisement agents be induced to take this large effective circulation into account or to go beyond their self-hypnotising formula of "net sales certificates." The havoc which pedantic insistence upon this principle has wrought among the more serious periodicals in this country is a national misfortune.

For this havoc the big advertisers may not be directly to blame. Most of them leave the actual placing of their advertisements to an advertising manager or to an agent. These men not unnaturally prefer the ease of keeping a few large accounts to the bother of keeping many small accounts. Their work is thus simplified and, in the case of advertisement agents, commissions are earned with less trouble. For this reason also the tendency is to crush out the "small" newspaper or periodical and to favour the concerns which deal in big sums. In my view the advertising "profession" bears a heavy responsibility for the undeniable lowering of the character and quality of the British Press as a whole during the last ten or twenty years. Like newspaper owners, advertisers operate in "moral values," and no amount of hand-washing indifference, or "business is business" cant, makes them less answerable for the harm which their sins of omission and commission have done and may do to the public through the Press. They are eager enough to get editorial "puffs" from complacent journals. They frequently insist that their advertisements should be placed "next to reading matter" so that the eye of a reader may be less likely to escape the suggestion of their advertise-

ment In a dozen ways they seek to influence the Press to their own advantage How long will it be before they rise to a view of the moral responsibilities of their "profession" at all commensurate with its influence upon the life of the nation ?

I have often discussed this matter with manufacturers of popular wares and with other big advertisers whose outlay on newspaper publicity runs into six figures annually, and I have suggested to them that they should not leave the allocation of this large sum solely to a technical advertising staff or to an advertisement agent If they thrive on public purchases of their goods they owe some duty to the public They ought therefore to set aside a proportion, say, 10 per cent, of their annual outlay on advertisements for the benefit of periodicals and other publications that seek to instruct and to educate rather to amuse their readers Otherwise the better class of periodicals may be starved to death Sound business is not always short-sighted business

News agents and news vendors, both individually and in the form of distributing companies, play a very important part in the circulation of newspapers and periodicals As regards the major distributing companies their business is peculiarly profitable, because other people's money helps to finance it It is really a commission agent's business These large companies fetch newspapers and other publications from the offices where they are printed, convey them in lorries to the railway termini whence newspaper trains carry them throughout the country and distribute them to railway and other bookstalls For these services newspapers pay in the form of a rebate of one-third of their published selling price, *plus* a 5 per cent commission London morning papers—of which all except *The Times* are now published at one penny—are distributed in quires of twenty-seven copies each at a wholesale price

of 1s 6d Of the 2s 3d. which the public pays for these twenty-seven copies, one-third, or ninepence, goes to cover the distributor's costs and to provide his profit He settles up with the newspapers periodically Meanwhile, the majority of individual buyers of newspapers pay cash for them, though some newsvendors run weekly or monthly accounts with their patrons The bulk of the cash paid by individual purchasers passes to the wholesalers who can use it as working capital and may have a good deal of it in hand before paying over to the newspapers the proportion of the selling price which is their due National morning papers actually get about 1s 5d per quire of twenty-seven copies

Onerous though this system may be, its justification is that newspapers find it less costly than to organise and maintain distributive systems of their own Besides, the great national newspapers are powerful enough in combination to keep the demands of wholesalers within bounds This advantage is not enjoyed by weaker journals or by high-class periodicals that seek to stand on their own feet. The case of one such periodical may be given by way of illustration

The owner of this periodical had reason to be dissatisfied with the arrangements made for distributing it It was being systematically hidden from view on the bookstalls controlled by a firm of wholesalers. On inquiry the owner was told that more might be done for him if he would pay a fee for "scaling out" an extra supply of copies on the wholesaler's bookstalls When the fee had been paid and the "scaling out" process had gone on for a time, the owner thought that his magazine might be able to "run alone" So the "scaling out" fee was discontinued The firm of wholesalers retaliated not only by ceasing to order the extra copies for "scaling out," but by reducing its original order, so that its bookstalls were unable to

supply, except on "special order" involving the loss of some days, the copies for which the public asked

Moreover, the wholesaler's payments to the owner were made at irregular intervals and invariably fell short by some 40 per cent of the amount due to him, the shortage being covered by a mysterious item called "stock in hand" Upon further enquiry the owner discovered that the firm of wholesalers was retaining this high percentage of his money ostensibly as a precaution against his eventual failure to meet his engagements When he suggested that "stock in hand" really meant the measure of the wholesaler's distrust of his solvency, no answer was given, nor was there any response to his further suggestion that the real, albeit unconfessed, purpose of "stock in hand" was to retain permanently for the use of the wholesaler a proportion of the owner's working capital Resolved to put the matter to the test the owner then offered to deposit in a bank, as a guarantee for "stock in hand," a gilt-edged security to an amount higher than the sum usually retained by the wholesaler—on two conditions These conditions were that "stock in hand" should disappear from the wholesaler's statements of account, and that the interest on the deposited security should be payable to the owner, though the principal could not be touched without the wholesaler's consent

This offer was flatly refused, and the owner drew his own conclusions They were not flattering to a firm which, in addition to receiving a rebate of some 37 per cent upon the selling price of his periodical, was reckoning thirteen copies as twelve and charging a further commission of 10 per cent upon actual receipts from sales before withholding a goodly portion of the remainder as "stock in hand" So the owner enlisted the good offices of another wholesaler who knew the

"tricks of the trade" and was able to circumvent them

Enough has been said to show that not all is well with the "business side" of the Press. A little light on dark places may perhaps be wholesome and help to check abuses that flourish in obscurity. Both as regards the distributing companies and the advertising side of the "newspaper industry" light is the more needed because few newspapers that wish to maintain their advertising revenue, or do not wish to "get on the wrong side" of distributing companies, are likely to have the courage or to run the risk of saying what all of them know. Yet to say what he knows upon matters of public interest is the proper business of a journalist. So I have written what I know.

More light is also needed upon circulations, less as a guarantee to advertisers than as a means of assessing the true influence of the Press. A wealthy owner of many shares in a "group" of newspaper companies observed, not long ago, that a circulation of two millions is now merely a "commercial question." He meant that if enough inducements of various sorts—none of them connected with journalism proper—are offered to the public, any kind of "popular" newspaper can be made to reach the two million mark. In this somewhat arrogant statement from a magnate of the newspaper industry there is some truth and some exaggeration. The truth is that if a paper can offer enough attractions and benefits to induce a million or two of hypothetical readers to buy it, advertisement agents can be relied upon to cover the cost of those inducements and to leave the paper a substantial profit. The paper must, of course, be "popular" and devote a large proportion of its "editorial" space to prize fights, film stars, "suggestive" illustrations and other matter which the masses are believed to prefer. It must also offer com-

petitions and "must be won" prizes, or gifts of books below cost price. In a word, it must relegate journalism proper to a very subordinate position and go in for grocery of the baser sort, the sort that gives away something with a pound of tea. The influence of such papers upon the opinions of those who take it in, or are taken in by it, bears no ascertainable relationship to its circulation returns. And lest it weary its public by overinsistence on things that really matter, or by attempting consistently to instruct its readers and fashion their thoughts, it must "vary its appeal" by making its pages a rag bag.

There are exceptions to this rule even among the "popular" Press. One journal, the *Daily Express*, which possesses a circulation of well over two millions, laid the foundation of its prosperity by legitimate journalism. It beat all its competitors, again and again, by being first with the news. It gave, sometimes it still gives, real news, more promptly and more fully than its competitors. It does not long suppress or even persistently hide news which is unwelcome to it, and it has been known to counteract the interested foreign propaganda in which some of its contemporaries indulge by sending representatives of its own to search out and to tell the truth. Newspapers of this kind deserve to succeed. The *Daily Express* has succeeded in sufficient measure, by worthy journalism, to make its lapses into the lower forms of catch-penny huckstering a matter for regret.

Among the more recent triumphs of sounder journalism has been the phenomenal increase in the circulation of the *Daily Telegraph* since it came under the control of Lord Camrose, formerly head of the "Berry Group." At its price of one penny it competes on equal terms with the "registered reader," prize-offering "popular" papers, though it abstains from these dubious devices. Not only does it offer fuller

information than they upon many serious topics, but it frequently prints as many pages as the twopenny *Times*. It has taken away scores, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of subscribers from Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail*, and since its absorption of the *Morning Post* in 1937 it has retained in its circulation of over 650,000 copies at least 100,000 of the former readers of that journal. Were the *Daily Telegraph* to pursue an independent public policy it might aspire to an influence unsurpassed by that of any other paper. With a "soul" of its own it could become a truly "leading" journal comparable in the quality of its power to great provincial dailies like the *Manchester Guardian* or the *Yorkshire Post*.

The circulation of *The Times* was long, and to some extent still is, restricted by its price, for in few respects is the newspaper-reading public meaner than in the price it is willing to pay for a good newspaper. In 1908, when Lord Northcliffe gained control of *The Times*, its circulation at the price of threepence was, as I have said, well below 40,000. For some years he sought by every means his fertile brain could devise—including the "brightening" and, in some ways, the actual improvement of its contents and make-up—to increase its sales without lowering its price. The net result, after four years of effort, was disappointing. In 1912 the price was reduced to twopence and the circulation rose by about 10,000. Half-convinced by this experiment that price was the real obstacle to an increase of circulation, Northcliffe decided, early in 1914, to make *The Times* a penny paper so that it could compete on equal terms with the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post* (The *Daily Mail* and other "popular" journals were then sold at a halfpenny). He thought the change would be a dangerous gamble and was convinced that either *The Times* or one of its two penny rivals would succumb. Nor did he believe that at a penny

the circulation of *The Times* would permanently exceed 80,000. This belief he backed by offering bets to members of his staff. He lost them all. The orders for the first issue of *The Times* at a penny were in the neighbourhood of 650,000, more than it could easily print, and in a few weeks it had settled down to a sale of 165,000 copies, which was considerably larger than the circulations of either the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Morning Post*.

In the early months of the War, which broke out in August, 1914, the circulations of all newspapers went up, that of *The Times* at a penny sometimes exceeding 300,000. But the cost of newsprint likewise increased and presently compelled all newspapers either to increase their selling price or to diminish their size or both. The half-penny newspapers had to become penny papers. The penny papers had to become 2d, though, for a period, *The Times* halted midway at the awkward price of 1½d. At an equal price of 2d the circulation of *The Times* was always ahead of that of the *Daily Telegraph*, but when the cost of its special white newsprint compelled *The Times* to revert to its old price of 3d, the *Daily Telegraph*, printed on slightly inferior paper at 2d, again took the lead.

The most interesting thing about these changes of price was their effect on circulation. Even at a moment when money was plentiful, and soldiers in the trenches or on leave at home had ready cash at their disposal, every increase of one halfpenny in the price of *The Times* meant a fall of some 30,000 in circulation. Though at the end of the War *The Times* was still selling 120,000 copies daily at 3d, or nearly twice as many as it had ever sold before at that figure, it was clear that with the return to peace conditions its price would have to come down. Northcliffe suddenly reduced it by one half—again to 1½d, ½d lower than the *Daily Telegraph*—early in 1922. This reduction

involved heavy financial loss for a time, but the circulation rose immediately by more than 60,000 copies daily, and before the end of 1922 it had increased to well over 200,000. A subsequent return to the price of 2d. cost another drop from which its circulation slowly recovered. According to figures supplied by *The Times* in 1936 to the authoress of *The English Press*, it was then selling 195,843 copies at 2d. The totals given for 1937 in the P.E.P. *Report on the British Press* were 192,000 for *The Times* as compared with 637,000 for the *Daily Telegraph*.

Still, the discrepancy between even a 200,000 circulation of *The Times* at 2d. and a 650,000 circulation of the *Daily Telegraph* at 1d. would be wide enough to suggest that price is a main factor in the diffusion of a newspaper. Given equality of price, and equal journalistic ability in their production, there would be no reason why *The Times* should not sell as many copies as the *Daily Telegraph* or even more, and it seems regrettable that, in these days of mass circulations which amount to a total of more than 11,500,000 copies of newspapers daily, the appeal of some of the more educative organs of the Press like *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* should be restricted by the factor of price.

If the chief function of the Press is still thought to be that of informing, instructing and educating the public, one further development of modern journalism ought to be considered. Fifty years ago the educated classes of this country relied upon the monthly and quarterly reviews for instruction upon matters of intellectual and scientific interest. Notwithstanding the high prices charged for them, these reviews enjoyed circulations which are beyond the dreams of their present owners, or of the owners of such of them as still survive. The old *Nineteenth Century*, *Contemporary*

and *Fortnightly*, among the monthly reviews, and the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh* among the quarterly reviews, were able to attract contributors of the first rank and to pay them well. One has only to think of the excitement aroused in the late eighties of last century by the controversy between Gladstone and Huxley upon *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, or by Gladstone's review of Mrs Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* in the *Nineteenth Century*, to appreciate the difference and, in some respects, the falling off between then and now. A journalist of genius, the late W T Stead, understood the eagerness of a much wider circle of readers than could afford to buy these expensive reviews to gain access to the fine writing which they contained. Therefore he founded his *Review of Reviews* at 6d. In a few years it reached a monthly circulation of 88,000 copies.

To-day conditions have changed. Daily newspapers compete for "features" with the reviews and, thanks to large circulations and enormous incomes, are able to pay well-known writers on a scale with which high-class periodicals could not compete, even if these were not crippled by the indifference or the hostility of advertisers. Daily papers can, moreover, publish the work of their contributors more promptly than reviews are able to do, and thus ensure that what they publish will not be out of date by the time it is printed. Even so, a daily paper can hardly do duty for a high-class periodical either in the provision of space for careful treatment of important subjects or in permanence of form. In this respect the gradual squeezing out of the reviews is a serious loss.

Some modern newspapers, chiefly in the United States, seek to bridge the gap between things of lasting and things of passing interest by publishing "magazines" of their own. In this they are wise, wiser than the majority of British newspapers. The remarkable success

of the *Listener*, which reprints, week by week, the "talks" broadcast from the studios of the B B C, shows that the public appetite for sound information can be under-estimated by journalists or newspaper proprietors who trade upon what they imagine to be the public liking for vulgar trivialities. The day may come when a newspaper-maker of genius will understand how wide the field already is for journalism of a better sort and will cultivate it through a popular daily paper. It would be an auspicious day for the British Press.

CHAPTER VII

“COMMERCIAL JOURNALISM”

IN the last week of May, 1937, the British “Empire Press Union” held its Annual Conference in London. A feeling of modesty, in more than one sense of the term, may have restrained British newspapers from publishing extensive reports of its proceedings, though several of the addresses it heard would have been worthy of public attention. Chief among them was a reasoned analysis of journalism by the veteran J. A. Spender who, during his editorship of the old “sea-green” *Westminster Gazette*, had more influence upon British public opinion than any other editor of an evening paper since the beginning of the century.

The spirit of his remarks was the breath of the older journalism which never forgot that the freedom of newspapers from official control carries with it a high measure of public trusteeship, or that this trusteeship is the warrant for the claim of journalists to a special place in public life. What he said stood out in sharp relief against some passages in an earlier address given by Mr. Tom Clarke, sometime news editor of Lord Northcliffe’s *Daily Mail*, afterwards editor of the *News-Chronicle*, and latterly Director of Practical Journalism at London University.

Speaking of modern popular journals as products of the newspaper revolution which began with the present century, Mr. Tom Clarke wondered whether all that the revolution achieved is as good as those who helped to bring it about imagined it would be. “For,” he

added, "we have seen the transformation of the Press into one of the major industries of Britain" He went on to say that he had received a letter addressed to him not as the Director of Practical Journalism at London University but as the Director of "Commercial" Journalism Admitting the shrewdness of this apparent error, he said —

Quite frankly I doubt if there is nowadays any other sort of journalism, and I am not ashamed to say that I have always tried to assist the commercial success of any newspaper I have worked for There is, after all, no special virtue in commercial failure, and, despite all the Jeremiahs, I am not prepared yet to believe that, in the world as it is, commercialisation of the Press has been the evil some people think It can, I think, be argued that it has been good for the public and good for the Press, and has rid us of a lot of humbug

Continuing, Mr Tom Clarke repeated a remark made to his students of journalism by Colonel the Hon E F Lawson of the *Daily Telegraph* Colonel Lawson had been listening to one or two speeches from half-fledged students who—in Mr Tom Clarke's words—"still believed that newspaper work was, in the first place, a sort of idealistic crusade for the betterment of the world" So Colonel Lawson said "Newspapers, I think, resemble fashionable ladies of the West End in that they are more concerned with their *figures* than with their *morals*"

This commercialisation of the Press, Mr Tom Clarke observed with truth, has had a profound effect on editorial status He doubted whether there were more than three newspaper editors, in the old sense of the word, left in the whole of London—and he defined the outstanding feature of the newspaper revolution as having been "the gradual transfer of the balance of power, in the matter of control, from the Editorial to the Business side The economics of this new Press are

different from those of any other industry. Although the first duty of a newspaper must remain the supply of reliable and first-class editorial comment, it is obvious that, after all, the business is concerned chiefly with the value of its advertising and the cost of its newsprint. The Press has become too highly mechanised for the old system of complete editorial hegemony.”

Then Mr Tom Clarke, as the Director of Practical Journalism, committed himself to this revealing statement —

Where the editorial man to-day most differs from his forerunners is that he must have a sound and sympathetic understanding of all other departments. When he becomes an editor he should invite his circulation man and his advertising man to his conferences. The one knows what the public are interested in and how and where to get them. The other, while not interfering in purely editorial matters, can help in preserving the balance of the paper *and saving such needless folly as putting the report of a fatal motor smash alongside of a motor advertisement* (The italics are mine.) The editor is still responsible for all that appears in the paper and, after all, the advertising side supplies half of it.

This is the bluntest description of “practical” or “commercial” journalism I have yet seen in a country whose Press still claims freedom and would have people believe that it is free. Far be it from me to challenge the accuracy of Mr Tom Clarke’s definition as applied to “popular,” dividend-seeking, bonus-share-distributing fruits of the newspaper industry. I would only suggest to those who accept this definition as comprehending the whole duty of journalists, editors, and even of newspaper proprietors, that they should pause and reflect whether their conception of public duty is compatible with the continued existence of a free Press at all, and whether they may not be preparing the way

for another newspaper revolution that will make of them bond-slaves in appearance no less than in reality

It was upon this subject for reflection that Mr J A Spender dwelt with deep insight "If I were a German or a Russian or an Italian," he said, "and were asked what is the status of a journalist in my country, I should have to answer that he has no status at all and must consider himself lucky not to be in prison or in a concentration camp" Mr Spender added —

The position of the Press is one of the fundamental tests of the nature of government, and that it should thus be reduced in so many countries is a fact with which all of us, and most of all Governments and Ministers who are responsible for foreign affairs, have to reckon One half of Europe has no means of free self-expression, and, so far as its rulers can determine it, is shut off from moral, intellectual and political intercourse with its neighbours When we (journalists) are considering our position and status, we must think of it against this background

There has been nothing quite like it in the history of the world Emperors, ecclesiastics and other kinds of dictators in the Middle Ages would no doubt have liked to keep at a distance all opinions which they thought dangerous, but they were left without the apparatus for doing so Preaching friars went from country to country, famous teachers and wandering scholars passed from university to university, their books, written in Latin, which was the *lingua franca* of all educated people, were read in every country by the politically influential classes In this way there was a common fund of thought and opinion which even in the most autocratic countries saved the pool of knowledge from becoming stagnant What in our days, I wonder, would happen to Erasmus, that greatest of journalists, who went from Court to Court all over Europe, who lectured everywhere and whose pamphlets and letters were eagerly read wherever intelligent people thought about Church and State It seems to me quite certain that any one of the

modern dictators would have laid him by the heels as soon as he appeared on their frontiers

Nothing, Mr. Spender went on, has so brought home to journalists in countries where the Press is still supposed to be free, a sense of the part free journalism should play, as the extinction of free journalism in totalitarian countries. He quoted a book by a distinguished French writer and Communist, M. Andre Gide, which recorded M. Gide's disillusionment on finding the people of Russia in complete ignorance of what was happening elsewhere and consequently in a state of self-conceit which seemed to him almost incredible. They were persuaded that everything done in their own country was far in advance of anything done elsewhere, and they had ceased to learn foreign languages because they had nothing to learn from foreign countries. This, M. Gide reflects, was because the official Press, their sole means of information (apart from the official radio) told them daily a flattering tale and denounced everything incompatible with it as a malicious lie

I would add, for my part, that what is true of Russia is scarcely less true of Italy and Germany. People's minds are imprisoned and are bereft of light and air. Nor does the suppression of criticism and free comment work in one direction only. If it prevents the people of countries under dictatorship from knowing what is being thought and said and done abroad, it prevents all but the most discerning newspaper readers in free countries from understanding the position in dictatorship countries. Foreign newspaper correspondents in those countries are heavily handicapped. They live under constant supervision, they may be expelled at any moment, and quite apart from the censorship which controls their work, it is dangerous for them to write or to suggest the truth lest they be arrested and charged with hostility to the State. At the same time the editors and the editorial writers of their papers at home have

to bear in mind that plain speaking on their part, in their own countries, may be visited upon their correspondents, or that every copy of an issue of their papers may be seized in totalitarian countries should it contain matter unpalatable to the authorities. Hence correspondents are tempted to use a kind of secret language, and to take refuge in ambiguities which attentive experts understand but which bewilder the mass of newspaper readers.

Nor does the evil stop here. Totalitarian Governments often profess to desire peace and friendship with countries where the Press and public opinion are still comparatively free. So foreign criticism and the publication of unpleasant facts are deplored as tending "to impede friendship and to endanger peace." Moreover, when independent and well-informed writers in free countries comment truthfully upon the doings of totalitarian Governments, the ambassadors or other emissaries of those Governments lose no time in suggesting to newspaper proprietors or editors that the publication of contributions from such writers "irritate" the dictators and are therefore dangerous. Newspaper proprietors, editors and special writers are invited to visit totalitarian countries, as the guests of their Governments, so that "friendly personal relations" may be established and "good will" be promoted. They are shown what it is thought advisable that they should see, and nothing they should not see. Not a few of these visitors return more than half-persuaded that a totalitarian system works well among the peoples who have "adopted" it, however unsuited they may think it to their own countries.

In these and other ways totalitarian States manage, in effect, to restrain foreign criticism without causing public resentment. Herr Hitler has, it is true, publicly demanded that British newspapers be brought under Government control, at least to the extent of suppressing

criticism of himself or of Nazi Germany And he threatened Great Britain with a “ National Socialist answer ” if this were not done To him more than one British journal made sturdy answer Others, with proud traditions to uphold, expostulated feebly and sought to appease his wrath They forgot that in dealing with bullies meekness is a vice

This indirect control of the Press in free countries by the pressure or the blandishments of dictatorships is doubly harmful to free countries themselves Without full information, the public opinion of those countries cannot serve as a guide to Governments or to Parliament, and where informed public opinion ceases to act upon Governments a safeguard of public freedom is lost A premium is put upon intrigue, and there is no check upon the whispering campaigns which the agents of dictatorships, or their foreign dupes, may start against the Ministers of free countries who withstand totalitarian ambitions Rumours are spread that the retention of office by such Ministers impedes the improvement of relations between the totalitarian country and his own And, in the last resort, they may be compelled to resign as “ obstacles to international concord ” Not so very long ago a British Minister was allowed to leave office in circumstances of this kind, and on the very day when he was publicly denounced by a foreign dictator as a man of inferior judgment ! A long process of “ commercialised ” degeneration in the “ free ” British Press had preceded this crowning disgrace

In his address to the Empire Press Union Conference in 1937 Mr. J A Spender could not refer to all these effects of the curtailment of journalistic freedom, for some of them were not visible when he spoke But he drew attention to a significant change which totalitarian influences threaten to bring about in the theory of government itself Whether we like it or not, he

said, we have to reckon with the fact that serious people, even in this country, hold doctrines upon methods of government which are quite incompatible with the existence of a free Press. These doctrines are held equally by politicians of the Right and those of the Left—by the Right which fears revolutions, and toys with the idea of “planned” or “planning government on the Fascist or Nazi model,” and by the Left which thinks of government as the universal provider and toys with the idea of making it the business of experts. Now if, as these people seem to believe, government is a science of which the principles and the methods are known only to experts, it is folly to let ignorant or inexpert persons meddle with expert wisdom. But the whole idea of freedom, and therefore of free criticism and a free Press, depends upon the conception of government as an art, not as a science, an art of infinite variety and fallibility requiring constant adjustment to the changing tastes, needs and interests of human beings and of the human mind. If we believe government to be an art, Mr Spender argued, a free Press contributes to the proper practice of this art by giving voice to the changing needs, fashions, and moods of a free people, and the status of the journalist, if he does his duty honestly, is high and secure. If, on the other hand, government is regarded as an exact science of which the principles can be known only to a select company of experts, the free journalist is a presumptuous busybody, and a free Press impedes progress by its brawling.

Nor (I would interpolate) is this all. It is not enough that the people of Great Britain and the nations of the British Commonwealth should hold—as they have hitherto held—government to be an art and not a science, it is also essential that the Press itself should be free from internal as from external shackles, and that it should deserve a degree of respect commensurate with its rightful function and high standing in a free

community If it invades the sphere of individual freedom and intrudes on privacy in its itch for “stories of human interest” to increase circulation and “commercial” prosperity, it forfeits this respect And if it becomes a slave to its own mechanical efficiency and to the vast agglomerations of real or watered capital employed in the “newspaper industry” it will have gained vast circulations and “earned” large dividends at the price of its own poverty-stricken soul.

As a journalistic veteran of more than fifty years’ standing Mr Spender recognised that journalism is to-day far more “efficient” than it was when he first came on the scene He said —

Its enterprise in news-getting, the skill and daring of those who serve it, tested alike in peace and war, its success in distributing its wares by land, sea and air, all this is an extraordinary achievement Nor is it a just complaint that at a time when our daily work is dull and mechanical it should seek to amuse its readers and provide them with the daily variety show which enlivens the pages of so many of our most successful papers To give the public what it wants is a legitimate object so long as the goods provided are honest and unadulterated

Only a churlish spoil-sport will pull a long face over the increase of innocent pleasure and amusement that is provided in this way But when we are speaking of the status of the journalist we are bound to remember that any respect or prestige that he enjoys beyond others who are competing in this business depends on the belief that the Press is the great exponent of public opinion, and a fearless and independent critic of the conduct of international affairs. If it is not in some measure this, there is no reason why the journalist should stand higher in public esteem than other public entertainers

Here, once again, Mr Spender hit the nail on the head It was, he rightly urged, the journalism of opinion, the expression of views as distinguished from the providing of news, which was the source of the

authority and prestige of the British Press in former days. It was concerned chiefly with politics which, being interpreted, mean public affairs. The space now given to politics has steadily declined. Newspapers fought a long fight, in bygone days, for the right to publish reports of debates in Parliament. Now Parliamentary reports are condensed and treated under different heads, and in the most widely-circulated newspapers Parliamentary speeches are hardly reported at all. "Slogans" and headlines take the place of argument. In the little space allotted to him an editorial writer has no room to argue. He must assert and lay down the law. Of the seven evening papers (most of them journals of opinion) which were published in London fifty years ago, from dingy little offices down side streets and with circulations altogether contemptible by modern standards, only three now survive, and of these three—though Mr Spender did not say this—not one can claim to be truly a journal of opinion. Yet those older evening papers, with their puny circulations, were pulpits from which great journalists like Greenwood, Morley and Stead were heard all over the country and sometimes shook the world.

The danger to-day is that men like these may no longer take to journalism as their profession. Very few necks would have to be severed to make an end of political journalism in the modern Press. Mr Spender said that if he had a Utopia of his own he would let no newspaper have a circulation of more than 300,000 copies. Then we should have four or five newspapers where we now have one, and four or five times as many journals as there now are.

To my mind Mr Spender's—Utopian—restriction would not get at the root of the trouble. Papers with legally limited circulations would still have to pay their way, and the question is whether any journal of opinion

could to-day pay its way in view of the cost of mechanical production, difficulties of distribution and of the unlikelihood that it would appeal to readers with an appetite for pictures, “ snippets,” “ human stories,” the antics of film stars, football competitions and the profits of professional bruisers. On this point the evidence of Mr Spender himself, as given in the second volume of his admirable work *Life, Journalism and Politics*, is enlightening. No British evening paper and very few, if any, morning papers can have been better written or conducted in a purer spirit of clean journalism than was the *Westminster Gazette* under his editorship. Yet its normal circulation was never higher than 20,000 copies, even if it touched 25,000 during the South African war of 1899–1902 and rose again to about 27,000 during the Great War. It never paid its way. Something like £500,000 was spent upon it during the thirty years of its existence, and its losses varied from £5,000 to £15,000 a year. There were one or two years in which it almost made ends meet, but the competition of inferior papers and the rise of the general level of costs threw it back. When at last it was turned into a morning paper and was ultimately absorbed by the *Daily Chronicle* the prospects were that it would have lost £20,000 a year by holding on its course.

Why was it not possible for a journal of opinion of this high type to make its way in London? The answer is that it put its leading article on its front page, made politics its chief concern, and laid itself out to convert and to persuade by its writing. Its appeal was to the politicians when they assembled in the House of Commons, and to serious readers who wished to have something to think about in their leisure hours. The appeal was therefore deliberately to the few, and the trouble was, and is, that these few were and are so few. It was not enough that Frederick Greenwood in the old *Pall Mall Gazette*, or John Morley or W T

Stead in the later *Pall Mall Gazette*, or Sir Edward Cook or Mr. Spender in the *Westminster Gazette* should write for a select audience of politically-instructed readers. Nor was it enough that those readers were the makers of opinion from whom a wide influence radiated outwards. Nor, from the standpoint of the survival of those newspapers, could it suffice that all other journalists read them and drew inspiration from their articles. The public whose pence were needed to keep such newspapers alive hardly numbered 50,000 in London, or 100,000 in the whole country, and of these potential subscribers no single newspaper could hope to attract more than 30,000—a circulation insufficient to command an advertisement revenue equal to the cost of production, even when revenue from sales was added on. “Popular” papers, with big “net sales” certificates, seemed to advertisers better “business propositions”.

Then there was the difficulty of distribution. A serious journal of opinion, unable to pay its way, could not afford a multitude of newspaper carts or distributing vans. It had to rely upon regular subscribers whose name was not legion. In his book Mr. Spender asks whether the problem of the journal of opinion is really insoluble. He quotes Northcliffe, who always held the *Westminster Gazette* in high regard, in support of his opinion that it is not. Northcliffe used to say that if he had owned the *Westminster* he would have made it pay in six months without changing its character or its politics. He would have saved the expense on a separate office, would have distributed the paper through his own efficient organisation, and would have turned on his army of canvassers to increase its sales. Whether he would then have left its character unchanged is a very open question. Mr. Spender believes that the proprietors of one of the mass-circulation “popular” papers could establish a journal of opinion and make it pay, but he doubts whether they would resist the temptation then to change its character.

until it became merely a duplicate of one of their other publications. He finds the thought depressing that there should not be room for even one newspaper of opinion in the greatest and most populous city in the world, and says he dreams sometimes of a newspaper which should boldly rely upon quality rather than quantity of circulation and give its advertisers a guarantee that it would never sell more than 100,000 copies per day.

I, for my part, think it highly improbable that any present proprietor of a popular newspaper will establish or care to establish such a journal of opinion as that of which Mr Spender dreams. The value of a journal of opinion would depend upon the quality of the opinions expressed, and no opinion of quality upon current public affairs is likely to be expressed save by an editor or an editorial writer of strong mind, deep conviction and forceful personality. Newspaper proprietors to-day dislike editors and editorial writers of strong personality. They prefer that their own personalities should be served by expert scribes who can be trusted to advocate whatever view the proprietors may wish to proclaim. In the old days many proprietors cared not only for the freedom of the Press—that is, the right of the Press to say whatever it thought the public interest required, without interference from Governments—but they cared also for freedom as a good in itself. To-day they appear to care little for freedom in itself and do not perceive that by placing the Press in bondage to financial or “commercial” interests they are helping to destroy journalistic and to undermine public freedom. The very magnitude of their financial “interests” renders them peculiarly susceptible to the influence of doctrines which put the defence of property higher than the defence of freedom, and though they may disapprove of the complete bondage in which the Press has been placed by Soviet Russia, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany,

they fail to instil into the readers of their journals a sense of the danger this complete bondage implies to the free civilisation of democratic countries and to the freedom of the Press itself

To the status of the Press in Russia reference has already been made. It serves as an instrument of government in a totalitarian State as, indeed, journalism does in Italy and Germany. At the same time it is not easy to gainsay the critical verdict upon the freedom of the British Press which forms the conclusion of two volumes entitled *Die Presse Grossbritanniens* which were published by a German official writer, Dr Max Grunbeck, in 1936, with the approval of Dr Ernst Hanfstaengel, who was then chief of the Foreign Press department of the German National Socialist or Nazi Party. This work, which contains a detailed history of the British Press sums up its author's conclusions as follows —

Especially in recent years British newspaper men and politicians insist that Great Britain and the United States of America are countries where the Press is absolutely free. This might be warranted to a large extent if "the freedom of the Press" meant its freedom in relation to the State. But the claim is absolutely unfounded if one takes into consideration the strong degree of economic dependence in which the modern British Press finds itself. The economic success of an English newspaper is so overwhelmingly dependent upon its advertisement columns that the advertiser has been able to develop into a Press dictator who, as such, plays a part far more dangerous than that of the State since in the majority of cases his influence is secret, entirely selfish and not susceptible of control. Besides, the whole make-up of the English popular papers is to-day the clearest example of their economic dependence upon advertisements. So advertisers exert influences which, in effect, are scarcely less efficacious than restrictions of newspaper freedom by the State itself. When Lord Rothermere's papers gave vigorous support for a time to

the Fascist movement in England their initiative was throttled in a few weeks by their advertisement department. This economic dependence of the British Press and its editors is equally plain in the financial and commercial newspapers, and even newspaper freedom from State influence is by no means unlimited as it is often supposed to be. The State has various possibilities of influencing newspapers, and, particularly at critical moments, old and half-forgotten laws like the Official Secrets Act can be brought forward to throw serious shadows upon the halo of British newspaper freedom.

Even if it be true that the fears which monopolisation of the Press might have inspired have not hitherto been fully realised, it is nevertheless undeniable that, despite its splendid technique and the variety of its contents, a great part of the British Press has become a very poor thing. The power it once possessed to lead and to influence public opinion is heavily shaken. The intellectual level of English papers, especially that of the leading London journals which was once so high, has fallen considerably. In exchange there has been an astonishing economic success which finds expression in immense circulations, high profits and dividends and large turnovers. This it was that caused Paul de Sury d'Aspremont to write in his book *La Presse a Travers les Ages*: “The soul of a people ought to be in its Press, but this Press in the hands of a few financial magnates may murder its soul by corruption instead of directing it.” Hardly ever can there have been a case in which Balzac's sentence hit the nail on the head with so few exceptions as in the case of the British Press. “The newspaper which should have been a shrine became an instrument, and from being an instrument became a business.”

If this verdict is inspired in part by resentment that advertisers in the Rothermere Press should have checked its support of the Nazi-Fascist organisations in England, and should thus, for once in a way, have used their influence for the salutary end of helping to safeguard public freedom, it contains criticisms which no fair-minded observer can dismiss as wholly unwarranted.

However pertinent those criticisms may be, the best answer to them is that there remains enough freedom of the Press in this country to permit of their publication; and the fact that no similar criticism of the State-controlled Press could be published in Russia, Italy or Germany is the aptest comment upon the position in those countries. We, for our part, have to consider whether "commercial journalism" can ever be free journalism and, if not, how the freedom and economic independence of the Press can be preserved without crippling subservience to commercial and financial interests. For this is one of the main aspects of the problem of our political and individual liberty.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRESS AND THE LAW

No English law affirms explicitly the freedom of the Press, and not a few English laws explicitly curtail it. If this were all, the Press could have no grievance against the law. Its freedom would be neither more nor less than the freedom of individual citizens to do as they please as long as they do not transgress the law. Nor can the Press reasonably complain that its power of publicity—which is far greater than the power of any individual—should be surrounded by safeguards against abuse. On this ground alone a law, even a drastic law, of libel would be justified. The grievance of the Press, under the law or the laws of libel now existing, is that newspapers have little expectation of getting impartial justice if they are prosecuted for libel. And this prospective denial of justice not only restricts their freedom to serve the community but exposes them to extortion.

Save under the "Incitement to Disaffection Act" of 1934 neither a man nor a newspaper can be prosecuted for an alleged offence until he or it has actually committed or attempted to commit the offence. Undoubtedly the "Official Secrets Act," and the laws bearing upon the protection of public morals and the defence of the State against sedition, do threaten the freedom of the Press in arbitrary ways. But if these be left out of account the prospect of a denial of justice to newspapers lies mainly in the usual methods of legal procedure for alleged "contempt of court" and in the

working of the laws that govern criminal and civil libel Nobody knows exactly what comment upon the conduct of a trial may render a newspaper liable to conviction for "contempt of court" In principle, "contempt" is any criticism of a judge or magistrate that may damage his reputation for fairness, or any comment upon an action at law or a pending trial that may seem likely to create prejudice against the fairness of the proceedings in court But in practice a judge who may think himself unfairly criticised by newspaper comment upon his conduct of a case can either (if he be really fair-minded) refer the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for trial by jury, or (if he be less fair-minded) can have his critic brought before a tribunal of other judges who have almost unlimited discretion in punishing the newspaper Against their decision there is no appeal It can only be over-ruled by a Special Act of Parliament

This method of procedure is calculated to deter, and does deter, newspapers from offering reasonable criticism upon so important a matter of public interest as the administration of justice If it stands to reason that newspapers should be restrained, by heavy penalties, from commenting upon a trial before it has taken place and from diminishing public confidence in the impartiality of the justice to be administered, it is not reasonable that judges should be entitled to ignore the legal maxim that "none can be judge in his own cause" Recognition of this anomaly may, indeed, have prompted Lord Atkin in 1936 to give the ruling "Provided that members of the public abstain from imputing improper motives to those taking part in the administration of justice and are generally exercising a right of criticism and not acting maliciously or attempting to impair the administration of justice, they are immune Justice is not a cloistered virtue" But even this ruling leaves judges free to determine whether critics of their adminis-

tration of justice "are generally exercising a right of criticism" and are "not acting maliciously or attempting to impair the administration of justice", and it does nothing to check the prevailing methods by which, without practical possibility of securing redress for a miscarriage of justice, a citizen or a newspaper may be punished for "contempt of court" by a juryless tribunal consisting only of judges

In these circumstances newspapers are chary of criticising faults in the administration of justice. Not less cautious are they in deciding to take the risk of defending an action which may be brought against them for alleged libel. Under English law a libel that gives ground for a civil action is also ground for a criminal prosecution on the plea that any libel tends to a breach of the peace. But prosecutions for criminal libel have become rare. One reason may be that under the Law of Libel Amendment Act of 1888 the consent of a judge is necessary for a criminal libel prosecution against a newspaper, since judges only give leave if they think a civil action unlikely to secure adequate redress.

The number of actions for civil libel against newspapers that actually come into court is small in comparison with the claims for alleged libel which newspapers settle out of court. Probably not more than one or, at most, 2 per cent are actually tried. This is because the law itself is vague, its interpretation by a judge and jury uncertain, and because juries are apt to look upon newspapers as fair game for any plaintiff who can make out even a flimsy case against them. So, in the great majority of cases, newspapers think it more prudent to suffer extortion in private than to be outrageously mulcted in public. Let me give a case in point.

A leading London journal happened to publish a letter from a correspondent in which a certain writer, who had shown marked sympathy with Russian Bolshevism, was mentioned by name. The allusion to

THE PRESS

~~It was in no way~~ But unluckily the letter attributed to him the Christian name of another writer with the same surname, and this slip had been overlooked by the paper's editorial staff. Next day the writer whose Christian name had been wrongly used asked that the error should be corrected.

It was corrected immediately, with an editorial apology for inadvertence, and the correction was published in large type on a page more prominent than that on which the offending letter had appeared. But a few weeks later the recipient of the apology instructed a lawyer to inform the editor that, as his client felt he had suffered moral damage from the mistake, notwithstanding its inadvertence and the promptness with which it had been corrected, he had been advised to take action for libel.

The editor and the manager of the journal also took legal advice. It was to the effect that juries are so hostile to newspapers that it would be expedient to pay compensation rather than incur the cost of defending a libel action and run the risk of seeing the jury award heavy damages to the plaintiff. So several hundred pounds were paid as "compensation."

Similar or worse instances of extortion frequently occur. Some shady lawyers make a business of these operations. They trade upon the fact that newspapers, which have defended themselves in libel actions for publishing news or comment, true in substance and in fact, upon matters of indubitable public interest, have been condemned to pay heavy damages for a merely technical libel upon plaintiffs whom everybody knew to be unmitigated rascals. And they do not, as a rule, trade in vain.

A former Lord Chief Justice of England who knew the workings of the law of libel, expressed some years ago his conviction that no branch of English jurisprudence needs more thorough revision than this

What is salutary in it, he argued, could be preserved and rendered more efficacious as a safeguard against defamation if the anomalies and iniquities of the present law were swept away. With this opinion every experienced and responsible journalist must agree. The law of libel consists chiefly of inco-ordinated sequences of legal precedents and decisions which have become so complicated that few writers or publishers dare face the consequences of even a technical infringement of it. A libel is defined as a defamatory statement in writing, printing or other permanent form which exposes any person to hatred, ridicule or contempt or tends to injure him in his office, profession or trade, unless the statement is "privileged" by having been made in Parliament or in the course of a Government enquiry or in judicial proceedings or in reports published by either House of Parliament. But these "privileges" are not absolute. Indeed, there is good legal authority for saying that the circumstances which constitute privilege cannot be exactly ascertained.

In practice the decision depends upon the opinion of the judge whether or not malicious intent has entered into the re-publication of a statement which was once privileged. The law defines malice as any corrupt or wrong motive or personal spite or ill-will such as a judge may hold to have been shown by a reproduction of facts originally divulged in Parliament or in the Law Courts. In this case privilege ceases to be privileged.

In another sense the English law of libel may bestow privileges that are ludicrously unfair. It has happened within the past few years that foreign personages, citizens of countries where all personal freedom and legal impartiality are suppressed, and where British institutions are held up to contempt, have successfully availed themselves of our libel laws to muzzle our Press and to secure, by legal proceedings or threat of action for libel, damages or compensation from British news-

papers which have fairly criticised, in the public interest, the doings and characters of such foreign personages. And British courts of law have lent themselves to this exemplification of the reactionary paradox "In the name of our principles we deny you freedom, and in the name of your principles we claim it from you" !

Nor is this all. The responsibility for libel bears little relation to the actual responsibility for publishing it. It is not only the author of an alleged libel (if he is known) who is answerable for whatever damages may be awarded to a plaintiff, the printer, publisher and editor are equally and even more directly liable. A stronger deterrent to the publication of anything susceptible of being construed as libel—no matter how clearly public interest may demand its publication—can hardly be imagined. Certainly no publisher is anxious to risk his capital in producing a book which, however wholesome its opinions or statements of fact, may involve him in proceedings for libel. Printers, with all their manifold virtues, are rarely heroic enough to court martyrdom. And their several and joint responsibility is surrounded by further devices to prevent the escape of any or all of the hypothetical delinquents. It is the duty of an editor to edit his whole paper, not trusting to the accuracy of any report by an expert reporter, and being careful to remove blasphemy, sedition and obscenity as well as every unfair attack on a public man and everything which private individuals may take to be defamatory or libellous. Otherwise an editor may expose himself, his proprietor and printers to action for libel. The only person who may escape is the actual author of the libel, since the editor is not bound to disclose the author's name except in cases of prosecution under the "Official Secrets Act", nor can he or the owners of a newspaper enforce indemnity or claim compensation from the author if they are convicted of libel. But the law provides that every newspaper or

book which is intended 'o be published or circulated must bear the name and address of the printer, who can be forced to disclose the name of his employer. The system is full of traps for the unwary.

In addition to a writ for civil libel an application to a judge for permission to prosecute for criminal libel is sometimes held in reserve as a means of intimidation. One instance of this kind may be taken from the unwritten political history of the past twenty years. It can be substantiated by witnesses still living. The special correspondent of a British newspaper felt bound, in discharge of his duty and in the public interest, to record a threatening communication which had been improperly made at an International Conference by the head of a British Delegation to the head of another delegation. After testing the accuracy of the information which reached him, the special correspondent telegraphed to his journal what he understood the substance of the communication to have been. The telegram aroused indignation in this country against the head of the British Delegation, who lost no time in demanding, through members of his official staff, a public denial of the charge from the head of the other Delegation who had been the object of the threat. The first impulse of this gentleman was to refuse to lend himself to any denial of what he knew to be true, though he had not been the source of the information which reached the special correspondent. But under stress of renewed pressure from the staff of the chief British delegate, who did not refrain from suggesting that the consequences of continued refusal might be serious for the other delegate's country, he weakly assented to a denial of the report that any threat had been used.

On the strength of this denial a prominent British Minister then informed the House of Commons that the special correspondent in question had been guilty of a "malicious fabrication," and steps were taken in

London to bring home to him the enormity of his offence. The principal legal adviser of his journal, a titled London solicitor of undeservedly high standing, was approached and induced to write a "lawyer's letter" to the proprietor of the journal saying that "according to rumours which are flying about" a prosecution for criminal libel, involving imprisonment, would be applied for and authorised against the special correspondent and that, on the evidence available, they would lead to his conviction. The wisest course, added this egregious lawyer, would be to give satisfaction "by the prompt dismissal of the offender."

If this "legal" advice had been followed forthwith and the "offender" dismissed, he might have taken action for wrongful dismissal against the proprietor of his journal. So the manager of the journal was sent to him, "lawyer's letter" in hand, to suggest that his resignation, with an apology for his offence, might be the best way out. The special correspondent, who knew something of lawyers, good and bad, answered that any decent office boy in any decent lawyer's office would have been ashamed to write this "lawyer's letter", that he himself had telegraphed in a guarded form what he knew to be true upon a matter of outstanding public interest, and that he would be prepared to prove its truth with the help of witnesses in a court of law. He added that he would be quite willing to go to prison if convicted of criminal libel, but that before conviction he would get the head of the British Delegation into the witness box and cross-examine him publicly upon the evidence before the court.

The rest was silence. The special correspondent was not dismissed. The threat of prosecution for criminal libel was dropped and nothing more was heard of the incident for some years. Then one of the witnesses whom the special correspondent would have called in his defence, had he been prosecuted, happened to meet

a British public man who had formerly been a member of the chief British Delegate's staff at the International Conference, and had taken part, with another highly-placed British official, in extorting the denial from the head of the foreign delegation. Asked, as a matter of historical curiosity, whether the account given in the special correspondent's telegram had been true or false, this British public man replied "Of course, every word of it was true, but we simply had to get a denial."

In this particular instance the mere prospect of a spirited defence—or counter-attack—sufficed to stop a malicious attempt to use the law of criminal libel against the Press for purposes of intimidation. But when such cases of libel come before the courts, defence is not always a simple matter. The first plea is naturally that the statement or statements complained of as being libellous represented "the true facts or, alternatively, that they constituted fair comment upon a subject of public interest." The truth of a statement is no defence in and by itself. Public interest that the true facts should be made known has to be proved. Now "public interest" is a term susceptible of many interpretations. It may, for instance, be held that while a minor public interest might be served by revealing an individual case of corruption or misfeasance, a major public interest might be damaged by the destruction of confidence through a suggestion that corruption or malpractices were more widespread than they could be proved to be. Nevertheless, the first line of defence in a libel action is usually to plead justification and to claim that the words complained of were true in substance and in fact. This plea looks sound. The trouble is that it has to be proved, and that in order to escape condemnation the defendant must also prove that the whole of the incriminated matter was substantially true. If only part of it can be shown to be true the plea of justification will not

stand And, as a leading King's Counsel showed in the *Political Quarterly* for April, 1935, the defendant is responsible "not only for the words complained of in their direct and primary meaning, but also for any implied or secondary meaning (whether he ever had it in mind or not) which the Judge rules that the words are capable of bearing and which the jury decides that they actually bear"

Legal proof is notoriously not the same thing as ordinary proof This is where the wits of lawyers sharpen themselves against each other, sometimes with scant respect for common sense or fairness And when the plea of justification fails because the judge and jury have been impressed by some learned legal hair-splitting, a defendant newspaper in a libel action may find itself in worse case than if the plea had not been put forward

There remains "fair comment" as a second line of defence In considering this plea the judge must decide whether or not the words used were such as to be comment upon or inference from facts that had been established and, if so, to instruct the jury to decide whether they were fair comment or a fair inference drawn in good faith In giving their verdict the jury must not consider whether they agree or not with the views expressed by the defendant, but only whether they think he was fair and honest in expressing his own views. On this point the jury decide for themselves

A third line of defence may be the plea that a newspaper was honestly mistaken, desires to make good its mistake, and has actually apologised for it As a rule, admitted mistakes cannot be made grounds of action for libel if the author or editor and the printer and publisher of them immediately take all steps in their power to put them right But, as I have shown in the instance already cited—when prompt rectification of and apology for a mistake in a Christian name of a writer did not save a journal from being blackmailed under

the law of libel to the tune of several hundred pounds—the humblest apology may not avail to save a newspaper from loss. As a matter of fact newspapers frequently prefer to apologise for stating what they know to be true and have divulged in the public interest rather than enter the maze of pitfalls which surrounds the law of libel.

In the event of permission being given by a judge for a criminal legal prosecution—with its attendant penalties of fine and imprisonment—the plea of justification no longer holds good. The alleged criminal must prove both that the words complained of were true and their publication was for the public benefit. Now “public benefit” is a term even harder to define than “public interest.” The judge may place his own interpretation upon it, and influence the jury in so doing, and the court may decide that the alleged criminal had no right to give the public information which he thought it to be “the public benefit” to give. It is to criminal libel that the legal paradox applies: “The greater the truth the greater the libel.” For in a criminal prosecution it is not the truth of the libel that is mainly in question but whether, in the opinion of the court, it was expedient “for the public benefit” that the truth should be made known. If a judge and jury think it was not expedient, the truth-teller for “the public benefit” may find reason to rue his zeal.

These are some of the drawbacks of British libel law. The general purpose of the law is doubtless wholesome and some of its effects are salutary. There cannot be the slightest “public interest” in saving journalistic and other defendants in a libel action from the consequences of the publication of lies or of defamatory diatribes inspired by hatred or malice. Nor is it “for the public benefit” that delinquencies of this kind should go unpunished. What “public interest” demands

is that these necessary safeguards of personal honour or private welfare should not be susceptible of being twisted in such a way as to favour the unscrupulously guilty rather than the honestly innocent. For this is what the present law of libel actually does. Indirectly, too, it compels newspapers to study the intricacy of the legal network so as to find out how far they can go without being caught. Most newspapers employ one or more experienced lawyers to do what no editor can always do—bear in mind the technicalities of libel and get round them by technicalities of expression. When an editor feels bound to expose some abuse in the public interest and for the public benefit, prudence will lead him to have the exposure read with a magnifying glass by competent lawyers before publication, so that the objects of the exposure or their legal advisers may search it in vain for some peg on which to hang a libel action. Few experiences in journalism are more satisfactory than to find that a trenchant attack upon some profitable piece of rascality has been so phrased as to foil the law-hounds of the interested rascals.

In political controversy, too, a double dose of preventive cunning may stand a newspaper in good stead. I remember one instance in which a prominent newspaper insisted that a public man of marked political agility would not be the best representative of his country at an important international gathering since, unlike some other statesmen, he did not “possess a reputation for conspicuous straight-forwardness and honour.” The denunciation was warranted in the public interest, but many readers of that journal feared the retribution which, they imagined, must overtake it. They forgot that it had not technically accused the public man in question of being dishonourable or crooked, it had said merely that he lacked “a reputation” for straightforwardness and honour. It had reckoned shrewdly that any public man with a variegated

record would think twice before taking libel proceedings to prove that he did, indeed, possess such a reputation.

So if cunning lawyers can drive a coach and horses through the law, astute journalists can also drive a good-sized vehicle between its pitfalls. This state of things may not tend to raise the general standard of public comment upon public affairs, but it is an inevitable consequence of the law of libel in its present state. No fair-minded reader of the British Press will assert that it contains nothing which exposes anybody to "hatred, ridicule or contempt," or which would cause anybody "to be shunned or avoided" or that nobody is ever injured in his profession or trade by what appears in its columns. What the law of libel really does is to put a premium upon oblique writing, upon emphasis by under-statement, and upon the use of all the arts and dodges which fertile minds can devise to circumvent an omnipresent though invisible legal censorship of which the fairness cannot be relied upon.

This is definitely not to the public interest, nor is it to the public benefit that fear of the law of libel should be invoked, honestly or hypocritically, by newspapers as a reason for withholding from the public things which the public ought to know. If the Press and its freedom are the central problem of modern democracy, if public opinion is the mainstay of democratic systems, and if the right to criticise public men and affairs is an essential attribute of freedom, the operation of a law which circumscribes freedom of comment and criticism may be inimical to public welfare, inasmuch as the law may deprive the public of the information necessary to the formation of sound opinion. Whatever the law may say to the contrary, every public man deliberately invites criticism of his public actions, and if he be shielded by the law from effective criticism, in the Press or elsewhere, public control of his activities is hampered. The same applies to wealthy and powerful corporations

such as rings, trusts, company promotions and other undertakings which would be less likely to forsake the straight and narrow path if they were sure that the Press could not be deterred from keeping a sharp eye upon them

For these and other reasons I agree with the former Lord Chief Justice whom experience of the law of libel had convinced that it, more than any other branch of English jurisprudence, needs thorough revision and amendment I agree, too, with the conclusions reached by the authors of the P E P "Report on the British Press" They are that while an "acceptable attempt at reform must recognise that the power of newspaper publicity is very great, and that the public must be safeguarded against its abuse," any such reform

should achieve two objects—to free the Press from exploitation by unscrupulous persons, which hampers the printing of news and comment required by the public interest, and to simplify and clarify the law by codifying it in one clear Act of Parliament Whatever the merits of the objects of the present law, there can be no question that it is unsatisfactory because it is so uncertain in its application, and this uncertainty is natural when the number of statutes and leading cases involved is borne in mind Whatever the law of libel should provide, few can favour a law which in its operation so closely resembles a "lucky dip"

I have said that the workings of the law of libel are the chief causes of denials of justice to newspapers if the "Official Secrets Acts" and the laws bearing upon public morals and sedition be left out of account Recent prosecutions have shown that the "Official Secrets Act" cannot be left out of account, and that the present law, or its interpretation, sorely needs revision The "Official Secrets Act" was passed in 1889 because a member of the Foreign Office staff had divulged the substance of a secret diplomatic document As there was no legal remedy for such a breach of trust, a special

law was made to provide it, and in 1911 and 1920 this law was amended. But at no moment was it intended for use against newspapers in the ordinary process of news gathering. The Parliamentary debates upon it show clearly that its main purpose was to check spying against "the safety and the interests of the State." Indeed a specific pledge to this effect was given to Parliament in 1920 by the Attorney-General.

Yet, of late the "Official Secrets Act" has more than once been used by the police in cases where the "safety and the interests of the State" were certainly not affected. One such case was promptly dismissed by the Court. In another the police carried their point in defiance of the pledge given to Parliament. A journalist at Stockport had supplied his journal with news about a swindler who was working in the neighbourhood. The local police prosecuted him under the "Official Secrets Act" on the plea that his information had been drawn from a "confidential" police circular which, as it presently appeared, was not marked "confidential" at all. But persons prosecuted under the "Official Secrets Act" are required to give the name of their informant. This the Stockport journalist refused to do, and the magistrates fined him. An appeal against their decision was dismissed by the Lord Chief Justice and his colleagues—though the Lord Chief Justice was the same person who, as Attorney-General in 1920, had given the pledge to Parliament.

Neither questions upon the Stockport case in the House of Commons nor expostulations by representatives of "newspaper interests" succeeded in persuading the Home Secretary to consider an amendment of the "Official Secrets Act" or to promise that the Act will not again be used against the Press in the discharge of its normal functions. The Government appear to be in a reactionary, dictatorial temper—a temper for which the Press, were it conscious of its duty and of its

power, would have the remedy in its own hands. The Government need the support of the Press at every turn. If the Press should resolutely withhold that support until all ambiguity upon the interpretation of the "Official Secrets Act" were cleared up, the Government would soon be brought to book and would, incidentally, be taught a wholesome lesson. After all, the Press is—or should be—the chief custodian of public liberties, to say nothing of its own.

CHAPTER IX

NEWS-GETTING

NEWSPAPERS exist to get and give news. How they get it is an intricate story. What they do with it when they have got it is another story. Most of them draw it from two main sources. They take current or normal news from the News Agencies and supplement or explain it by news and comment which their own correspondents at home and abroad collect and supply.

As the history of News Agencies shows, the getting and distribution of normal news is now a highly organised undertaking. But no independent newspaper can afford to rely solely upon what it gets from agencies. Their news goes to all who subscribe for it, and gives no advantage to one subscriber over another. So every important newspaper is obliged to employ news-getters and news-interpreters of its own in order that its readers may feel that something original or "exclusive" is being placed before them.

The art or craft of independent news-getting is a curious business which many of the men and women who practise it most successfully are often unable to explain. They need an instinct, a "nose," a *flair* for news, and they may be as unconscious of the way their instinct works as animals are supposed to be. They "sense" a situation and behave accordingly. Luck, too, may be on their side. In the course of my journalistic work I have been lucky enough, from time to time, to get "big news" of international interest, but not because I was looking for it or had made special plans to get it. It

came, as it were, by accident And the wider a journalist's interests are, the likelier will such "accidents" be

One or two instances may serve to illustrate this While I was studying at Paris University in 1895-96, and was also working in the French National Library on the history of liberal thought in Germany and Central Europe, a fellow-student in the Library presented me to his cousin, Bernard Lazare, a French Jew of some literary standing Lazare told me he was writing a critical analysis of the condemnation of Captain Dreyfus, some 15 months earlier, on a charge of having betrayed French military secrets to Germany and Italy Though Dreyfus had passionately affirmed his innocence he had been sentenced to penal servitude on Devil's Isle, the worst of the French penal settlements Bernard Lazare studied the evidence and reached the conclusion that Dreyfus was innocent Presently he sent me a copy of his analysis—the very pamphlet which persuaded Emile Zola to write the famous article "J'Accuse" that really started the great French and international crisis known as the "Dreyfus Affair"

This "Dreyfus Affair" contained in germ the anti-Jewish feeling that has since been exploited by Hitler in Germany The French anti-Semites made capital out of it They claimed that the honour of the French Army was offended by suggestions that a French court-martial had condemned an innocent man, and, as the officers who condemned him were mostly Clericals, the powerful influence of the Roman Catholic Church was used to prevent any revision of his trial French Jews and anti-Clericals—and many plain folk who wished only to know the truth—clamoured for revision So fierce did controversy become that the stability of the French Republic was believed to be threatened To defend Dreyfus was to assail both the "honour of the army" and "the safety of the State" And, since Germany and Italy were alleged to have benefited by Captain Dreyfus's

"treason," the crisis took on a dangerous international character

Naturally, I followed its course with interest. But at the end of August, 1898, when the "Dreyfus Affair" had become a burning topic everywhere, the Tsar of Russia issued a circular invitation to all the Powers to attend a Peace Conference at the Hague. I was then the correspondent of *The Times* in Rome, and on August 31, 1898, I called on the Italian Prime Minister, General Pelloux, to ask his impression of the Tsar's circular. To my surprise General Pelloux brushed it aside as a minor matter, and said "There is something much more important in the papers this morning—the arrest of the French Colonel Henry in Paris. He is one of the chief traitors or, at any rate, it is he who is responsible for the condemnation of Dreyfus. Dreyfus is innocent."

This was news for which the world was waiting. Remembering that General Pelloux had been Italian Secretary of State for War during the period covered by the condemnation of Dreyfus, and that he probably knew what he was talking about, I felt that he had, perhaps inadvertently, given me "big news." So it proved to be. Next day the suicide of Colonel Henry in prison was announced, and the demand for a revision of the Dreyfus trial became irresistible.

In May, 1907, a diplomatist with whom I was playing golf gave me, in a fit of anger, the biggest sort of news. Irritated by something I had written—and not having understood it—he called me several kinds of a donkey and, by way of proving my stupidity, blurted out a highly explosive secret. A diplomatic plot was afoot to isolate Great Britain and Italy and to smash the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 by bringing France and Russia into line with Germany and Austria-Hungary. I used this information indirectly, and very discreetly, so as not to compromise my informant. The result was a diplo-

matic storm of the first magnitude But the plot was foiled The plotters then made secret enquiry into the possible source of my information So hot were they on the scent that the indiscreet diplomatist felt bound to clear himself of suspicion by declaring, in an official report, that it was I who had informed him ! Somewhere in the archives of a great Foreign Office this document is doubtless preserved for the enlightenment of future historians

Another instance occurred on March 19, 1909, when I was correspondent of *The Times* in Vienna The European crisis brought on by the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in October, 1908, had reached its climax. War seemed imminent Austro-Hungarian armies were mobilised against Serbia on the South-East, and other armies against Russia on the North-East The Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the Austro-Hungarian Heir-Apparent and Inspector-General of the army, was due to leave Vienna that evening to take command of the operations against Serbia The whole of Europe, indeed, the whole world, was anxiously awaiting the turn of events in the well-founded fear that hostilities between Austria-Hungary and Serbia might bring on a general European war

During my work in Italy I had followed the controversies which raged, in and about the Vatican, round the "higher criticism" of the Gospels by certain Roman Catholic divines, and had taken shape in a movement of religious thought called "Modernism" In this way I had come into contact with some eminent Italian theologians and preachers One of these men visited Vienna in the spring of 1908 to preach a series of Lenten sermons in an Italian Church Next year he recommended to me another Italian priest who came to preach Lenten sermons in 1909 I offered this second priest a little hospitality and helped to make his stay pleasant He had arranged to return to Italy on March 20, 1909,

and, wishing to take leave of me, said he would call at 5 p m on the 19th I asked him not to be later, because my evening's work must begin at 6 p m , and I should then be unable to see him

To my annoyance he came late He was full of apologies and explained that he had been delayed at a party given by the Papal Nuncio in Vienna that afternoon in honour of the Pope's "name day" The Nuncio himself and his guests had been kept waiting by Father Fischer, a very influential Jesuit, who was the confessor of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand My visitor rattled off an account of the party and said, incidentally, that when Father Fischer had at length arrived, and the Nuncio had cut short his excuses for lateness by saying that when war was so near he could well understand that Father Fischer should have been detained by His Imperial Highness, Father Fischer had answered "No ! No ! The danger of war is over The Archduke has just told me that everything will be settled peacefully and that he is not going to the front "

My visitor was quite unconscious that he had given me news of outstanding importance He went on with his somewhat garrulous gossip until I reminded him that my work was urgent, and sent him on his way Then in an explicit private telegram and a less explicit public telegram I informed *The Times* that there was strong reason to believe the danger of war to be over I reflected that if there were one man in the world to whom the very devout Archduke would have told the truth it was Father Fischer, his Jesuit confessor

Most journalists who have managed to get "big news" without sacrificing something of their independence could, I imagine, cite similar instances from their own experience "News" has to be worked for and gleaned in a hundred ways, but it often comes unexpectedly and, as it were, at a tangent, to those who touch life at many points The news which enabled

Lord Northcliffe to buy a controlling interest in *The Times* came to him because his love of music and youthful skill as a pianist had enabled him to appreciate the genius of Paderewski. Northcliffe had been invited to a party at the Stuart-Wortleys', where Paderewski was to play. But the night was so foggy that he telephoned regretfully to say he could not go. His host urged him to make a special effort to come, saying that Paderewski would be playing some of Northcliffe's favourite music. So Northcliffe groped his way through the fog to the Stuart-Wortleys' house, where he met an acquaintance who had just helped to amalgamate the more or less bankrupt Great Central Railway with what was then the Midland Railway. Northcliffe congratulated him upon this achievement and was told in reply that something more sensational was being done—the amalgamation of the bankrupt *Standard* with *The Times* under the management of Mr C. Arthur Pearson. The use Northcliffe made of that information forms a special chapter in the history of the British Press.

Items of "big news" or "scoops" that are got in this way distinguish true "news-getters" from the more pedestrian news-collectors who haunt the Press bureaux of Government Departments or Parliamentary lobbies, and "keep in with" official personages or diplomatists in the hope of learning something of interest from time to time. Now and again they may glean information independently. But as a rule—a rule that tends to become more general and more absolute—journalists who do not stand well with official quarters are apt to be left behind in the race and to see their more subservient colleagues go ahead of them. If they are foreign correspondents they may be penalised or even expelled from foreign countries for publishing news distasteful to the Governments of those countries, and they cannot always be sure that their own papers will back them up

if they get into trouble. Of late, it is true, there have been some splendid instances to the contrary, but there have also been instances that tend to make painstaking and conscientious news-gatherers feel that their journals value timid discretion more highly than fearless service of the public.

One of the most admirable recent examples of this fearless service was given by Mr Norman Ebbutt, the late correspondent of *The Times* in Berlin. Only those who have worked under similar conditions can understand how severe is the strain of living in a hostile atmosphere while observing events, and of writing in such a form as to instruct careful readers without giving vigilant and ill-disposed authorities a chance to punish the writer. As an old hand at this kind of work, albeit under conditions far less trying than those which prevail in Nazi Germany, I put the work of Mr Norman Ebbutt in Berlin among the highest and best that has ever been done for an English newspaper. Day after day he told the truth as nearly as it could be told, and kept that part of the British public which had eyes to read and minds to understand aware of what was going on in Germany. When, at length, the Nazi Government expelled him because they could not silence him they struck a shrewd blow at Great Britain.

A news service of this kind is intrinsically more valuable and stands on a loftier level of journalistic achievement than even the getting of "big news" or "scoops." And it distinguishes the work of individual newspapers from that of news agencies and other purveyors of news in bulk. Yet news agencies discharge an indispensable function. The stream of news which they supply to the Press is like the food supply that keeps a nation alive, and, just as the public rarely gives a thought to the ships which bring grain and other food-stuffs to our shores, so newspaper readers do not often pause to think of the organisation and enterprise that

lie behind telegrams or statements marked "Reuter" or "Press Association," to mention only these agencies. The bulk of the "intelligence" furnished by news agencies to their subscribers is of the normal kind—that is to say, it announces facts and events without expounding their inner meaning—but it makes up nine-tenths of the regular information which reaches the people of this country either through the Press or in wireless news bulletins. The story of the origin and development of news agencies has been told by the present head of "Reuter's," Sir Roderick Jones, and in re-telling it briefly I shall draw mainly upon his account.

The seed of the "news agency idea" came from the East where "intelligence" has always circulated and still circulates in the bazaars, sometimes with uncanny speed and accuracy. The idea may have been brought into Europe by the caravans of oriental traders who passed more or less regularly from the Near and Middle East through the chief cities and markets of Central Europe. The first European experts in news-gathering and distribution on a large scale were the Fuggers of Augsburg in the fourteenth century. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the members of the House of Fugger had become the merchant princes of Central Europe who acted as links between East and West. Much of their success was due to a system of news letters which gained for them, well ahead of their rivals, early information that enabled them to increase their wealth and power. Three centuries later the Rothschilds of Frankfurt, Vienna, Paris and London did much the same thing. The means by which the London Rothschilds got the first news of Wellington's victory at Waterloo, and the profit it brought them, are matters of history. As there were then no telegraphs they organised a postal service by carrier pigeons.

During the first half of the nineteenth century *The*

Times was foremost in the collection of early news, and to its spirit of enterprise in this respect it owed much of its power and fame. But before the middle of last century a young Jewish bank clerk named Julius Reuter, of Cassel in Germany, had an idea that made him the pioneer of news agencies. He saw that the bankers and merchants of Germany depended upon the list of Paris Bourse prices which came daily from Brussels by slow mail coach. In those days the French telegraph system ended at Brussels, and the German telegraph system only began at Aachen (or Aix-la-Chapelle). By starting a pigeon-post service between Brussels and Aix-la-Chapelle Julius Reuter was able to get the Paris Bourse prices into all the big German towns several hours ahead of everybody else.

At first this was a purely business service of commercial and financial prices, not a news service. Success emboldened Reuter to extend it. But finding Germany, then split up into a multitude of larger and smaller States, too narrow a field for his enterprise, he came to London, took a small office in the City, and transferred his personal and political allegiance to England. Here also he was content, for a time, to collect and to distribute market prices. Presently he decided to go farther and to deal in news—news for the newspapers, political events at home and abroad, and other intelligence bearing upon matters of public interest.

The unwillingness of British newspapers to trust and to pay for his news service, even as a supplement to their own correspondence, handicapped Reuter for some time. So he linked up with two other Jews, one in Germany and the other in France, who had set up agencies in close contact with sources of official and business information. The Jew in Germany was Wolff, founder of the once-famous "Wolff Bureau", and the other in France was Havas, a French Jew of Hungarian origin, who established the equally famous "Agence Havas". On

July 15, 1859, Reuter, Wolff and Havas entered into a covenant by which Wolff and Havas divided Europe among themselves for news purposes, while Reuter took for his sphere the British Empire and the remainder of the earth. A copy of this document signed "Julius Reuter, A Havas and R Wolff" still hangs in the offices of Reuter's Agency.

Under this covenant Reuter had an exclusive right to the information obtained and distributed by Wolff in Germany and Havas in France, while they took Reuter's service of news from Great Britain and the rest of the world. Then Wolff and Havas made similar arrangements with other official and semi-official agencies in Austria, Spain, Italy and elsewhere. But as information from these sources was apt to be coloured by the views of the Governments of those countries, Reuter appointed special correspondents in the principal European capitals, as well as in great centres outside Europe, to give their own versions of events. It was, however, understood that these correspondents should not duplicate news which the semi-official agencies in their respective countries might send automatically, and should keep their independent accounts as close as possible to the bare facts without personal gloss or interpretations.

From these beginnings Reuter's Agency grew into the world-wide organisation of which it disposes to-day. In 1865 it was turned into a limited liability company with Julius Reuter as Governing Director. Upon the death of Reuter's son, who had succeeded him as Governor-Director, Sir Roderick Jones turned the company in 1915 into a private trust which bought up all its share capital, amounting to more than £500,000. In this way Reuter's was saved from falling into undesirable hands, and Sir Roderick Jones, who had made his mark as Reuter's Special Correspondent during the South African War of 1899-1902, was appointed chairman with full control. Some ten years later arrangements were

made to transfer eventual responsibility for Reuter's to another news agency, the Press Association, which is jointly owned by the provincial newspapers of the United Kingdom

The Press Association (or "P A" as it is called for short) is supreme in the field of home news. It was founded in 1870 with the aim of putting the provincial Press on the same level as the great London journals in respect of quality and quantity of news. In that year the two private companies which had owned the telegraphs of Great Britain were taken over by the Post Office. Until then these companies had collected and transmitted news on their own account. As this could not properly be done by a Department of State, the provincial newspapers formed their own organisation on a co-operative basis and named it the "Press Association."

The "P A" is governed by a board of seven directors who are drawn from the owners and executive staffs of provincial papers. Each director becomes chairman in turn and retires after seven years on the Board. Then he serves five years on a Consultative Committee which confers with the Board twice a year. Membership of the Press Association is confined to provincial newspapers, each of which must hold prescribed numbers of fully paid-up shares. London newspapers can and do subscribe to its news services, but only their provincial editors (at Manchester or Glasgow) are entitled to be members of the "P A" and to hold qualifying shares.

Unlike Reuter's, which specialises in foreign news, the Press Association supplies all kinds of home news, from reports of Parliamentary debates to accounts of horse racing. Its offices are linked by "direct printer" with the offices of all London papers and with the London offices of the chief provincial papers. Another telegraph system also pours a continuous stream of news into the

head offices of provincial journals at the rate of 140 words a minute. So prompt is this service that racing results, for instance, are said to be known in every British newspaper office before jockeys have had time to dismount

The electric teleprinter became the indispensable instrument of this service. The first teleprinter was produced and worked as long ago as 1873 by another news agency, the Exchange Telegraph Company, which had been established a year earlier. It could transmit telegraphically about 25 words a minute. The high-speed teleprinter of to-day is a far swifter and more efficient device, but before long it is likely to be replaced by "direct printers" based upon voice frequency or wave-band working, if not indeed by facsimile telegraphy which will reproduce whole columns in a few minutes and will not only deliver "copy" by telegraph but set it up in type. This facsimile transmission is not a process of sending messages letter by letter, as in the cases of teleprinters or direct printers. It resembles rather the "scanning" of a piece of copy in such a way that the whole of the sheet put into the sending machine comes out in facsimile at the other end. So much inventive skill is now being applied to this branch of news transmission that in the near future whole messages, irrespective of length and distance, may be delivered to newspaper offices in a flash, instead of being spelt out, no matter how swiftly, letter by letter.

These are some of the technical aspects of news transmission by a world-wide network of agencies. Reuter's, for instance, have special covenants with all the leading news agencies in Europe, as well as with the Associated Press and the United Press Agencies in the United States, with two Japanese agencies and with agencies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. While most of

these agencies cater for newspapers in their own countries, all major news, however distant its source, is telegraphed or telephoned to London, which remains the chief clearing-house of the world for news.

Notwithstanding the complexity, and the perfection, of the arrangements made by news agencies, the distinction between "agency news" and news supplied by the correspondents of individual newspapers is not likely to undergo essential change. Since agencies live by supplying a large number of newspapers, their tendency is to keep news matter-of-fact and colourless. The special correspondents whom they may employ to "cover" a particular event or to act as war correspondents are in a class by themselves and are less affected by this general rule. Broadly speaking the main business of the news agencies is to provide a connected record of events, while the individual newspaper correspondent is free to put more personality into his despatches. Of late, it is true, news agencies have tended to infuse into their despatches more colour than was formerly thought likely to be acceptable to their clients, and in so far as this tendency makes for brightness and interest in the recording and presentation of news the public will have no reason to complain, provided always that accuracy be not sacrificed. A news agency can have no more valuable asset than a reputation for trustworthiness. Hard though it may be for its representatives to write anonymous and unemotional chronicles, it is safer and sounder for them not to compete with the correspondents of individual newspapers in point of vivacious or brilliant writing. They are news-collectors and news-transmitters rather than judges or interpreters. What may perhaps be thought the loftier sphere of personal judgment and critical interpretation is rightly denied to them in the full measure in which it is conceded to the correspondents of individual journals.

These circumstances raise an issue which is ever present to the minds of newspaper owners, editors and correspondents alike. The outlay incurred by news agencies in the collection, transmission and distribution of news runs into many millions of pounds a year. No newspaper can afford to bear this outlay by itself, and, if it could, the result would merely be to duplicate a large part of the intelligence which agencies are able to supply. Besides, subscriptions to news agencies are costly—and newspapers, like other business undertakings, need to justify their subscriptions. But, after all, agency news comes from sources which individuals have to tap, and no individual is infallible. The more official those sources, the less likely are they to be entirely truthful. So newspapers which rely mainly upon agency reports may unwittingly mislead their readers, either positively by giving them information that bears an official taint or negatively by not supplying information which Governments wish to withhold. For these reasons it is indispensable that independent journals which desire to inform their readers accurately and fully should be served by their own correspondents wherever this is practicable within the limits of cost. In this sense there is always bound to be a certain rivalry between individual newspaper correspondents and agency representatives—a rivalry that becomes the keener, and the harder for individual newspapers to sustain, in proportion as the network of agencies covers the ground more completely. The contest lies between what I may call the standardisation and the individualisation of news.

Within the past twenty years a new element has crept into this older rivalry, particularly as regards the British Press. The wireless broadcasting of news bulletins four or five times in the course of the evening has tended to give "agency news" a wider and prompter circulation than it had before. Listeners to the familiar phrase

“ Copyright by Reuter’s, the Press Association, Exchange Telegraph and Central News ” may not realise that what they are hearing is “ agency news ” and that they may need to study the individual news of various journals on the morrow in order to gain a more comprehensive impression. It says much for the general accuracy of the agency news summaries by the British Broadcasting Corporation—and, perhaps, for the care with which agency reports are sifted and co-ordinated by the editorial staff of the B B C—that discrepancies should be rare between the initial impression conveyed by the news bulletins and the fuller information provided by the Press next day. I have watched for some years this aspect of the wide publicity thus given to agency news, and think it fair both to the news agencies and to the B B C to state my personal opinion that, on the whole, the impressions which the public receives from the wireless bulletins are sounder and more impartial than they would be if the B B C were to rely upon the individual news of any paper or upon a news service of its own. But the relationship between Broadcasting and the Press raises issues that transcend this particular aspect of it, and I shall therefore essay to deal with it in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER X

BROADCASTING AND THE PRESS

FEW journalists and fewer newspaper owners look upon broadcasting without bias. My own bias is that of a man who, at the age of twenty, chose journalism as his life-work and has never regretted his choice. With the drawbacks and setbacks of work on and for the Press I am painfully familiar—including the drawback of finding convictions, gradually formed by experience and reflection, frowned upon and, as far as possible, excluded from daily journalism. But I have known the delight of fighting hard for good causes and of helping to win some of them. I have had, too, the satisfaction of going back into the ranks from a commanding position and of discovering how much honesty, courage and idealism still inspire my fellow-craftsmen. I have seen the leading journals of this country magnificently serve its highest interests, and I have also seen not a few of them, daily and weekly, sin against the light and succumb to diplomatic blandishments and to short-sighted financial or commercial influences. More than once in the course of the past thirty years I have watched foreign propaganda, subtly hostile to this country and to all that the British Commonwealth stands for, penetrate and pervade the British Press to an extent that would be incredible were it not proved, and I have been tempted to wonder whether British journalism is much better than a faithless steward of our national heritage. Then I have seen it, or the public upon which it depends, react with so much

sound sense that my faith in the Press and in the people has revived. So I am still a journalist, first and foremost, caring only that the Press should be free and that it should do its duty.

At the same time I have also been and am a broadcaster. I know the power of words spoken through the microphone to hundreds of thousands or, maybe, millions of listeners in this country and throughout the world. I have felt the magnetic response which a sensitive broadcaster may receive instantly from his listeners, and, like other broadcasters, I have had my share of what is known, in American jargon, as "fan mail." I, too, have come under the crippling censorship which the B B C can exercise on occasion, and my name has been on its black list for having protested, publicly and privately, against what I thought its grossly mistaken treatment of some important events. But experience of the difficult conditions under which B B C officials work, and of the mingled delicacy and power of the instrument they use, has taught me to sympathise with them and not to add to their perplexities by crotchety insistence on this or that point which, in my own view, ought to be put forward. On the whole they know their job far better than any amateur outsider can know it.

If, therefore, I may be unable to take an impartial view of the relationship between broadcasting and the Press I can, at least, see both sides of it. And I say without hesitation that the advent of wireless broadcasting, the broadcasting of news and views, is one of the most wholesome influences that could possibly have come into our public life, and that, in the long run, it may help to save the Press itself from some of the evils and dangers which now beset honest journalism.

One of the greatest advantages which the British Broadcasting Corporation enjoyed at the outset lay in its freedom from any temptation to produce high

dividends for share-holding proprietors. It was a public corporation, controlled, in the last resort, by Parliament yet with wide discretion in the use its governors might think right to make of the means of public information at their disposal. The remuneration of the capital originally invested in the B B C was limited to 7 per cent. There was no danger that it might be "watered" by the issue of bonus shares, or that the shares themselves might be turned into speculative investments by the payment upon them of fantastically high dividends. This was a guarantee of financial sanity and of public safety such as few newspapers could offer. Nor do I think that this guarantee has been essentially weakened in other respects by the changes made in the constitution of the B B C under its amended Royal Charter and Licence and Agreement with the Postmaster-General of December, 1936.

There is a further guarantee in the ultimate control of the B B C by Parliament, both as regards the charter of the B B C itself and the asking of questions in both Houses upon any aspect of its activities. The Postmaster-General, on behalf of the Government, controls those activities, and is responsible to Parliament in regard to them. Though this control may tend to "cramp the style" of the broadcasting staff, and to induce a state of nervous apprehension among their chiefs, it is in harmony with the democratic right of public criticism of public affairs. Unrestricted liberty to broadcast anything which either the governors of the Broadcasting Corporation or the Government of the day might wish to foist upon the public, and immunity from effective criticism of such broadcasting, would not be compatible with public freedom and would begin to resemble the conditions which prevail in "totalitarian" States.

Alongside of these wholesome limitations upon broadcasting lies an educative opportunity such as no

newspaper, or even the Press as a whole, can possess. It is that of bringing, instantaneously and simultaneously, into millions of homes statements of fact, interpretative comment, and arguments for and against given interpretations, in such a way as to appeal to the minds rather than to the emotions of listeners. While it is true that the British peoples in general and the English people in particular dislike and revolt against attempts to teach them anything, and prefer to "feel" about things rather than to reason them out, it is also true that our people are not indisposed to learn by stealth while they are being interested or amused. The broadcasting equivalent of the newspaper "pressure on space" is "pressure on time." Few broadcasters can say intelligibly more than 150 words a minute, and in order to put announcements of news, statements of fact, or arguments in a "talk" into the time-space of fifteen or twenty minutes, the matter must be at once condensed and well-expressed. This is the essence of good broadcasting as it is of good journalism, though the technique of interesting listeners in the spoken word differs considerably from that of interesting readers in the written or printed word.

Broadcasting has, moreover, a range of appeal far wider than that of the Press. Newspaper readers must be able to read, whereas a broadcaster can speak to the illiterate. An illustration of this power, and of some of its effects, was given in an article which *The Times* published on April 19, 1938, from its correspondent at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf. He wrote —

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of broadcasting, in countries where most of the population is illiterate the loud-speaker is far more powerful than the Press. Since the introduction of wireless the Arabs have taken a keen interest in foreign politics and in news about countries which a few years ago many of them had never heard of. Most well-to-do Arabs own a wireless set and

loud-speakers are used in coffee shops In Bahrein the recently inaugurated Arabic broadcasting from London has been received with interest and enthusiasm, and the news, because it comes from London, is regarded as being accurate It is not only news and music which are popular Recently an Englishwoman calling on an Arab woman discovered her hostess surrounded by servants, sugar and oranges, and was told by her hostess that she was making marmalade according to a recipe she had heard on the radio

Even in literate and, hypothetically, more civilised communities the mental response to impressions received through the ear is not exactly the same as the response to impressions received through the eye Partly because the habit of reading has rendered modern minds more responsive to things read than to thing heard, and partly because readers can take their own time to grasp a printed passage whereas listeners have to keep pace with the words and the thoughts of broadcasters, the appeal of the spoken word differs from that of the printed word A newspaper written entirely in broadcasting style might soon strike its readers as unreadable, and a broadcast "talk" delivered in the style of a newspaper article would certainly fail to secure the degree of attention which well-conceived and well-delivered broadcast talks can and do command

In this respect, at least, broadcasting and the Press should, as they often do, supplement each other If my own experience be any guide—and I think it must be similar to that of many other broadcasters—listeners who write to express pleasure or approval frequently ask whether and where they can get a "talk" in print They may wish to read it at leisure so as to "take it in" more fully, or they may desire to reflect upon and to analyse statements that seemed convincing when spoken vividly or dramatically Many people feel that the eye, which can pause while the mind ponders, is likely to be a safer guide than the ear, which has hardly

conveyed one impression before it conveys others in rapid succession

This was particularly noticeable in an emergency which I have always looked upon as a test case. During the General Strike of May, 1926, when newspapers were prevented for some days from appearing in their usual form, and arrangements were very haphazard for the distribution of such broadsheets as could be printed, the public got its news chiefly through wireless broadcasting. Those who had no wireless receiving sets learned from listeners by word of mouth what was going on. It might therefore have been supposed that when scrappy news-sheets could be tardily distributed a public already informed by wireless would take little interest in them. On the contrary, public eagerness to read printed statements of news already old seemed to be keener than ever. Things heard were not fully believed until they could be read in cold print.

Here, it would seem, the line of demarcation between the function of broadcasting and the function of the Press is clearly marked—to the potential advantage of both. Broadcasting may get its blow in first, and if its blow be shrewd and true it will command increasing confidence. But newspapers can strengthen and deepen the impression made by the spoken word if the news they give be equally true and straight, and if their comments upon it are such as to commend themselves to listeners who may have reflected overnight upon what they have heard before reading interpretations of it next morning. If this circumstance should act as a check upon the vagaries of the Press the public at large will not be the loser, and the Press itself should gain in influence and authority. But if “popular journals” should take it for granted that the public will not be interested in reading something that has already been broadcast, that what the public likes best in newspapers are “stories of human interest”—sensational accounts

of crimes, the antics of film stars and of prize fighters, pictures that go as far as they dare in the presentation of nude figures, prying reports upon matters of private concern, and other forms of appeal to the lowest levels of human curiosity—the Press will only have itself to thank should it find that broadcasting has become its saner and triumphant rival

In *The Newspaper World*, an organ devoted to the interests of the Press, a writer recently asked “Can the B B C be a menace to the Press?” He declared that the newspapers of this country need to come to a decision on this question without much loss of time, because delay and compromise may be construed by the B B C as weakness. Here the assumption is clearly that broadcasting is a rival and a potential enemy of the Press. Indeed, the writer goes on to say that while the Press of this country has not in any respect whatever (as, he alleges, it could have done) invaded the preserves of broadcasting, the B B C has repeatedly and consciously attempted a peaceful penetration of newspaper territory. This, he asserts, has happened in the two departments which are essentially and fundamentally Press operations, though they are not necessary operations of the broadcasting instrument—news dissemination and advertising.

While I agree that advertising is not a “necessary operation” of broadcasting, I am persuaded that news dissemination is, and for reasons already given I think that the function of news dissemination by the B B C does not necessarily conflict with the function of the Press. As for advertising, it has been the glory of British broadcasting to have kept the huckstering advertiser, with his “sponsored programmes,” out of British broadcasting. Yet, according to the writer in *The Newspaper World*, the evil of advertising is

tending to creep into broadcasting through devious channels

The case he strove to make out is both interesting and double-edged. Rightly or wrongly, the B B C. has included excerpts from plays in its entertainment programmes, and the charge against it is that the broadcasting of these excerpts has caused the public to fill the theatres where the plays in question were being given, and to turn what looked like being theatrical failures into successes. Actors who had been on half-salary, and were doubting how long they would be employed at all, have been able to play for full salaries to crowded houses for months on end after some scenes from their play had been broadcast.

If this be true, I should be inclined to say: "So much the better!" In any case the stricture hits the Press harder than it hits wireless "advertising." Is it not damaging comment upon the advertising capacity of the Press and upon the poverty of dramatic criticism? If members of the public rush to see a play, and pay for the opportunity of seeing it when they have been given a chance actually to hear some scenes from it, it would seem that Press reports and criticisms of the play have failed to tell the public what the public would have liked to know. Incidentally, broadcasting might thus render a service to the dramatic profession by enabling some of its members to earn a living, and a service to dramatic art itself, by leading the public to support "the real thing" rather than the "canned drama" of the films. If no better case than this can be made out against wireless "advertising" it will not carry conviction.

On another count the case against the B B C. may be stronger. It is alleged that some of the "variety" items of its entertainments programme are provided free, or practically free, by hotels and other establishments which are interested in advertising their entertainments.

by getting them mentioned on the wireless and that these items are to this extent, "sponsored" by advertisers. This system, critics of the B B C suggest, is unfair to the Press because it gives free advertisement to a commodity which ought to pay for Press publicity, and it is claimed that the whole of the Press ought to bring concerted pressure on the Government to make it give up some part of the 10 per cent plus £1,050,000 which the Postmaster-General is entitled to deduct from fees received for wireless licences so that the B B C may be able to choose freely and to pay adequately for all the items in its entertainment programme instead of getting part of them for next to nothing on a clandestine advertisement basis.

. . .

It was generally understood, when the British Broadcasting Corporation was given its charter, that its proportion of revenue from wireless licences would be entirely spent—after the £70,000 originally needed for interest on capital had been deducted—on the development of its service to the public and on such experimental research or improvement of apparatus as might be necessary to keep British broadcasting abreast or ahead of the radio services of other countries. The principle of keeping British Broadcasting free from the influence of advertisers is so sound, and is so firmly supported by the listening public, that the moral advantage it gives to the B B C over a Press which is increasingly dependent upon advertisers ought not to be lost or lessened in any way. No care can be too great to prevent the infiltration of "sponsored" programmes, foreign or British, into our wireless service. Whether such infiltration has occurred or is likely to occur the general public cannot easily judge. The more important is it that the governing authorities of the B B C should be ceaselessly on their guard

But criticism of the "invasion" of the sphere of the Press by broadcasting does not stop at this point. Exception is also taken to the enrolment by the B B C of its own staff of special correspondents or "observers" to report and comment upon, by telephone or wireless, the proceedings of such bodies as the League of Nations Council and Assembly or other interesting events in Great Britain and abroad. It is claimed that these "observers" are special correspondents in the journalistic sense, and that their reports, which are usually broadcast several hours ahead of the publication of analogous reports by newspapers, constitute unfair competition with newspaper enterprise. And the fear is expressed that if the B B C. continues to exploit the advantage it derives from the instantaneous dissemination of "eye-witness accounts" and special reports instead of co-operating with the Press on a friendly "live and let live" basis, the relationship between broadcasting and the Press will end by being the relationship between the whale and Jonah.

As a final grievance the further complaint is put forward that whereas a few years ago the B B C only broadcast two news bulletins in the course of the evening it now broadcasts five, and that it is preparing to denounce its earlier agreement with the Newspaper Proprietors' Association so as to free itself from the restrictions which it accepted under that agreement. In future, it is stated, the B B C intends to be at liberty to take its news from such sources as it may deem trustworthy and no longer to allow its choice to be confined to announcements provided by the four Press agencies—Reuters, the Press Association, the Exchange Telegraph, and the Central News. Some colour has been lent to these allegations by the recommendation of the Ullswater Committee in 1937 that the B B C should not be tied down to news agencies or to any other source of information but should be free to vary its

announcements by drawing upon other sources as future circumstances may require

The issue between broadcasting and the Press seems thus to be urgent and far-reaching. To judge it rightly, or even to lay down the principles upon which it should be judged, is by no means easy. Narrowly regarded, it is a contest between a State-sanctioned monopoly, in possession of the public ear, and a number of private undertakings—which their owners describe as an “industry”—in possession of the public eye. But the true question lies much deeper than this. It is the question of safeguarding public freedom to know, to discuss and to criticise everything that bears upon the proper conduct of public affairs.

Obviously public welfare and the freedom of public opinion might be endangered if the chief channels of information, and of comment upon information, should come under the exclusive control of a broadcasting monopoly which, with the assent of Parliament, drew its revenue from licence fees collected for it by the Post Office, a Government Department. This would be a (possibly sinister) approach to a “totalitarian” manipulation of the public mind, and no degree of efficiency on the part of the British Broadcasting Corporation could compensate a free people for this loss of essential attributes of its freedom. It is one thing to argue that, to-day, the service of news and comment provided by the B B C is, on the whole, more prompt, more rapid and more enlightening than any similar service which an individual newspaper or group of newspapers now offers. It would be quite another thing to suggest that the B B C could therefore be trusted to act as a substitute for the Press. The very fact that the Press competes for public attention through the eye with the appeal of the B B C to the public ear may be a pledge of impartiality on the part

of the B B C and a corrective to any dictatorial arrogance which it might otherwise be tempted to display. No free country can desire or, in the long run, could tolerate a monopolistic manipulation of public opinion by the broadcasting of news and views

So far so good But is the British Press in its present condition really entitled to throw stones at the B B C on the score of its alleged monopolistic invasion of the journalistic domain? Does not the Press, or the greater part of it, live in a glasshouse? Are not the proprietors of the majority of British newspapers themselves in the position of monopolists? Have they not grouped together so many individual publications which once lived free lives of their own, into "trusts," "alliances," and other combines that the public which reads these co-ordinated journals has to swallow whatever their owners may think right to lay before them? And have not the true functions of a free Press been bedevilled by unhealthy eagerness for big circulations as leverage for the extortion of high advertisement rates which bring huge profits to newspaper owners? Worst of all, have not some of these profit-making newspaper proprietors used their power to withhold from the public facts which the public ought to know, because those facts happen to conflict with the personal whims, prejudices or fears of newspaper proprietors, or to offend financial or other "interests" which secretly favour systems inimical to public freedom?

As matters stand to-day one may fairly ask whether any "national" British newspaper or group of newspapers has had the vision or the public spirit to offer the people of this country a degree of enlightenment comparable with that which the B B C has provided in its weekly "talks" on world affairs or in its series of discussions upon "The Way to Peace" or in its analyses of the relative merits of efficiency and liberty. I, at any rate, know of none One or two provincial

journals, like the *Manchester Guardian*, have done their best, as have some weekly reviews like the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*. So out of touch with things that really interest the people have been the great majority, alike of our "leading journals" and of their "popular" counterparts, that they would have rejected forthwith as "dud copy" the balanced explanations and the dialogues which hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of listeners have eagerly followed. In this respect, at all events, the editorial staff of the B B C have—to quote once more Mr Bernard Shaw's phrase "Come along with the real thing," and have proved the truth of his dictum that when a paper or a journal "comes along with the real thing" the public cannot have enough of it.

Is it possible—may a journalist and a broadcaster suggest such a thing without blasphemy—that the makers of the British Press are not up-to-date? Do they not know that the educative power of broadcasting is transforming the taste of the newspaper-reading public under their very eyes, and that their noses (hypothetically keen to sniff any change of wind) have lost the scent that leads to public favour? Is it not a portent that our mammoth "newspaper industry" should have lost the confidence of readers in such a degree that hectographed news-letters, purporting to give real news and to explain it frankly, find ready circulations without any of the costly plant that is needed to turn out journals crammed with and disfigured by "stories of human interest" and blatant advertisements?

Something is wrong somewhere. Exactly what is wrong, and where, a very expert finger might be needed to determine. The "newspaper industry," it seems, is spending more than a million pounds a year on canvassing for subscribers so that the real or nominal increase of circulation secured by the pestering of potential readers may serve to extract additional revenue

from advertising agencies and their patrons Sir Walter Layton, Chairman of the *News-Chronicle* and *Star* companies, declared not long ago that "it would be to the advantage of the British Press if the responsible heads of the great national dailies could agree that the time has come when their papers should sell more on their merits and less on the intensity of their door-to-door canvassing" On their merits? The point about canvassing, and the increases in circulation which canvassing sometimes achieves, is that these papers sell less on their merits than on their demerits, and that canvassers induce the public to buy them for reasons that have little or nothing to do with journalism proper or with the true functions of the Press And then the Press, which these practices disgrace and degrade, cries out because broadcasting gives the public, without canvassing, a "press service" after the public's own heart!

Is it not significant that there has been a tendency of late for talented journalists to migrate from newspaper staffs to the staff of the B B C? This is not because the remuneration offered by the B B C is on a higher scale than that offered by newspapers or that one of the drawbacks of the journalistic craft, insecurity of tenure, disappears when they join the broadcasting staff Nor is it that conditions of work are lighter or, on the whole, more agreeable The attraction may lie in the feeling that those who broadcast news and views are in closer and more immediate contact with the public than men in newspaper offices, that there is fuller scope for originality and greater freedom from the harassing sense that intellectual or literary effort must be subordinated to the business of adding to the revenues that go to produce fat dividends It may be that the Press will find itself unable to hold its own against broadcasting unless its owners set limits to their profit-making and recognise that newspapers

perform a public service which private financial interests cannot be allowed to overshadow. A hint of things to come may also have been thrown out by Sir Walter Layton at a banquet given to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the *Star*. He said that if the Trust which owns the controlling shares of that journal makes profits they cannot be used for the personal benefit of any of its members, but must be employed for the development or improvement of its newspapers, for the acquisition of new journals or, in the last resort, for useful social schemes such as better housing. This group of newspapers, he added, is a commercial concern in the strictest sense, but the constitution under which it works makes it a form of Public Utility and thus gives it a real measure of independence.

It is, I fancy, in this direction that the Press will need to evolve if broadcasting—which is eminently a public utility service—is not to outdo newspapers in serving the public. Apart from its technical advantages the strength of the public appeal of broadcasting lies in its independence of money-making considerations, and it is the insidious influence of money-making upon newspaper enterprise that has gradually sapped public confidence in the independence and straightforwardness of the Press. As the standard of public education is raised by better schools and more highly-trained teachers, the journals of the future may find that if they would retain the confidence of the public they must seek to approach the high level of journalistic truthfulness which marks a great newspaper like the *Christian Science Monitor* of Boston. The influence of this journal and the respect which it enjoys are by no means confined to those who profess or who even sympathise with its special religious outlook. It seeks to publish the truth as nearly as the truth can be ascertained at a given moment, and if its judgments err, they usually err on the side of charity. Whether or not it is a “commercial

proposition," in the sense of being a profit-making concern, only those who know the circumstances of its production can say. But it represents an ideal of responsible journalism which, so long as that ideal is pursued by newspapers, will help to save the Press from becoming a byword and the "newspaper industry" from becoming a "business venture," literally "of the baser sort," by trading in moral values in ways divorced from morality.

In a word, the contest between broadcasting and the Press needs to be judged from the standpoint of what is most conducive to public welfare and to the safeguarding of that freedom of public opinion which is a condition of true civilisation. Should broadcasting ever become an agency for the dissemination of one set of ideas to the exclusion of others, should any official or semi-official taint permanently disfigure it, or should it lend itself to other propaganda than that of making known, from day to day, facts and views which the nation needs to know, it would in its turn, require to be opposed, criticised and even denounced, and in opposing, criticising or denouncing it, independent newspapers would render a public service. But hitherto the work of the B B C has drawn inspiration from the principles on which the freedom of the Press itself was based. And it has served the public by fidelity to those principles at a moment when the freedom of the British Press was tending to become freedom for faithless stewards of the public conscience to betray their trust.

CHAPTER XI

IN A NEWSPAPER OFFICE

NEWSPAPER readers rarely give a thought to the work and the intricacy of organisation that have gone to the making of "their" paper when they take it up at the breakfast table or buy it at a bookstall on their way to business. They know as little of what lies behind the printed pages as a housemaid may know of the story of a lump of coal when she lays the fire. So I shall try to sketch in outline, and omitting many details, the sort of thing that goes on in and about a big newspaper office six days and six nights a week or, in countries where newspapers appear seven days a week, every day of the year.

The "day" begins, or should begin, very soon after the last edition of a morning newspaper has "gone to press," and the "night editor" and the men on late duty in the composing and machine rooms have ceased their labours. By 7 a.m. an experienced newspaper man with a critical eye should have been reading and comparing the contents of the other papers which either compete with his own or appeal to a different public. He should note at what points and in what particulars other newspapers "covered" yesterday's events better or less well than his own paper. Some may have "missed" the chief news altogether. Others may have put it hurriedly into the space reserved for "late news," sometimes called the "stop press." Others again, with smarter staffs or more vigorous night-editors, may have pulled to pieces the metal type of several pages of what would otherwise have been the last edition, and have put this

newest news in a prominent place with appropriate headlines and an explanatory introduction. It is this kind of keenness on the part of a newspaper staff that attracts fresh subscribers. Life goes to life.

When the expert critic has finished his early task he will make his report so that the various heads of editorial departments may have their attention drawn to the achievements or the shortcomings of their paper. One of the first to be informed should be the day "news editor," who has at his command a staff of reporters and special writers and larger staff correspondents in provincial and foreign centres. He is the pivot of their activities. He has before him a list of the public arrangements and engagements for the day, and instructs his staff either to report upon them individually or, if they be of minor importance, to let the news agencies "cover" them. And inasmuch as the object of a news editor is to make the next day's paper as "distinctive" as possible, he will vary his instructions according to the kind of paper which he believes the editor would wish to produce and its readers will appreciate. Much of this work can be foreseen and planned in advance. It is when other morning newspapers, or early matter supplied by news agencies, or telegrams from distant quarters of the globe bring unexpected tidings, that a news editor has swiftly to use telephone and cable to make sure that competent correspondents, writers or experts will "cover" the subject adequately and in good time for next day's issue.

In the old days, when "news editors" were unknown, this work of anticipation and co-ordination was neglected. The "man on the spot" was trusted to use his own judgment and to send in whatever he might think of sufficient interest. There were exceptions in the cases of important political speeches or gatherings in provincial cities. Staffs of expert shorthand writers might then be sent to take down the speech and tele-

~~MEMORANDA~~
G. B. BROWN

graph verbatim reports of what a Prime Minister or other leading public man had said. Nowadays these events are usually "covered" by news agencies, and individual newspapers have adopted the American principle of "more messages out than in," that is to say, fewer spontaneous telegrams than instructions to provincial and foreign representatives that their papers are or are not interested in this or that occurrence in their particular neighbourhoods, so that local correspondents may not overlook or over-report them. A wise news editor will, however, still leave considerable discretion to the "men on the spot," whose judgment may be sounder than his on the real importance of any given topic.

While news editors are thus "stirring up" provincial and foreign correspondents, the business (or managerial) side of newspapers is getting busy. One weighty question has first to be decided—the size of to-morrow's paper. This is usually a matter of judging how much space should be given to advertisements, and how much to news. If advertisements are "short," *i.e.*, comparatively few, managers are apt to feel that a "big" paper would not pay for itself, let alone yield a profit. Newspapers always print an even number of pages. The number may vary from 12 or 14 to 32 or more, but it never varies, say, from 15 to 31. This is because every page corresponds to a semi-circular metal plate which "clothes" half a cylinder on the printing press. Two plates, and therefore two pages, are needed to "clothe" the whole cylinder. But two extra pages of a paper with a large circulation may mean the consumption of many tons of additional "newsprint." So a balance has to be struck between the number of pages which advertisements "justify" and the number which the editorial staff might wish to fill. An experienced eye can often see at a glance what papers are making a profit on a day's issue and what papers are making a loss—for there often comes a point at which a loss has to be faced in

order that a paper may not be behind its rivals in the provision and the presentation of news

When the decision has been taken, the day staffs in the composing and machine rooms prepare for the night's work. The heavy rolls of "newsprint" are attached to the printing presses, the advertisements which have come in are classified and set up in appropriate type—different type, as a rule, from the type used for editorial matter—supplies of ink are got ready and, if an especially large edition is to be printed, arrangements for packing and distribution are extended.

Such calculations and preparatory work may be only provisional. As the day wears on, advertisements may "go up" by several columns or even pages, and thus necessitate not only a bigger paper but "justify" the allotment of more space to the editorial side. These changes, in their turn, mean more "newsprint," more ink, more type-setting, more metal plates for the cylinders, and more distributing vans or lorries. Both the managerial and mechanical staffs need to be elastic in mind and hand.

A generation ago the chief members of the "night" editorial staff rarely came to their offices before the late afternoon. They expected to be at work—with brief intervals for meals or refreshment—until the early hours of the following morning. Nowadays the necessity of printing editions for the provinces well before midnight or, in some cases, as early as 9 or 10 p.m., obliges editors and their staffs to begin work in the forenoon. What is this work?

Its variety is infinite. A newspaper office is a microcosm of the nation and, indeed, of the world. It is at once a monarchy and a republic, a hierarchy and a democracy, a place for team work and a field for individual effort. Side by side, many departments have their own special provinces which not infrequently overlap. Politics, economics, literature, art, music, the drama,

trade, finance, agriculture, shipping, sport, home affairs, foreign affairs, ecclesiastical affairs, science, engineering, astronomy and meteorology have all to be provided for, to say nothing of illustrations, broadcasting programmes and games. The monarch or, at least, the prime minister, is the editor. A foreign editor and a number of assistant editors are his colleagues and advisers. Other colleagues are the home and foreign news editors, the chief sub-editors, the City editor and the heads of various departments. Lesser folk, albeit with a hierarchy of their own, are the sub-editors, home and foreign, and the reporters. Special places are held by the Parliamentary reporting staffs, the lobby correspondents and expert writers on innumerable subjects. In some offices the writers of leading articles are in a class by themselves, with direct access to the editor and his assistants. They are often men whose opinions all their colleagues value.

As connecting links between the departments a staff of messengers hurry to and fro, distributing "copy" supplied by the news agencies through tape machines or carrying proofs and manuscripts. The chief messenger is a very important person.

"Secretaries" were almost unknown to the older generation of journalists. Only the editor had a "secretary," usually a younger man of University education trained to write letters or notes in the editor's name with tact and distinction. But the speed of modern journalism and the advent of typewriters have made a large secretarial staff indispensable to every newspaper. So newspaper offices are now graced by dozens of young women and youths without whose assistance the work of a modern newspaper could hardly be done in time. Compositors or type-setters who once took pride in their ability to read swiftly almost any handwriting are now so accustomed to "set" from typescript only that a manuscript in illegible handwriting provokes them to revolt.

The substitution of typewriters for pens has not added to the tranquillity of newspaper offices, however greatly it may have increased their efficiency. In addition to the secretarial staff, many reporters and editorial writers now use machines in the place of pens—sometimes without enhancing the legibility of the “copy” they produce, as two instances within my experience will show. One was that of a famous essayist who had long contributed “light leaders” to a great London journal. His hand-writing looked elegant, but on closer examination turned out to be almost unreadable. The other instance was provided by a distinguished writer whose articles still enlighten hundreds of thousands of readers daily. His handwriting also looked good and was damnable. Against both of them the printers ended by rebelling. These two wielders of the pen were therefore adjured to get typewriters and to produce typescript. By some congenital intricacy of mental and muscular co-ordination, or by some miracle of mechanical incapacity, each of them contrived so to misuse their typewriters that their typescripts were even less legible than their manuscripts had been. They ran their words together, wrote capital letters below the line or in the middle of the next line, and super-imposed three or four letters one upon the other—while their punctuation became as the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not. More time was lost by editors, assistant editors and sub-editors in transforming their cryptograms into intelligible prose than would have been needed by a really expert compositor of the old school to make out their written hieroglyphics.

Things like these bring mingled joy and exasperation to newspaper offices, joy to those who do not suffer from them, exasperation to those who do. More joy, more anger, some gratitude and much contempt are likewise engendered by would-be contributors from among the public and by the writers of “letters to the

editor ” The editor’s “post bag ” is a very weighty element in the daily work of a newspaper office Apart from correspondence personal to him—which may be heavy and range from the trivial to the highly important—there are usually scores, and sometimes hundreds, of letters intended for publication. These have to be gone through by private secretaries or assistant editors in the first instance, classified and, according to their subjects, sent round to the heads of the various editorial departments for comment or suggestion Thus letters on finance may go to the “City ” office, letters on foreign affairs to the Foreign Department, letters on policy to the editor himself, letters on scientific subjects, music, literary topics, the weather and what-not to the members of the staff who specialise in these things Then, in the course of the day or night, they find their way back, with recommendations and suggestions, to the editor or his chief assistant, who will either decline them or pass them to the printer Some, which there is no space to print in full, may have their chief “points ” extracted and printed Others which cannot be “cut ” in this way may be returned for abbreviation to their senders A proportion, which is often large, may be so libellous or abusive as to merit only “the spike ” or the more ignominious oblivion of the waste-paper basket But it is an absolute rule that no letter to the editor shall be “edited ” or altered in such a way as to change its writer’s actual words An editor is free to publish or not to publish He is not free to twist or to transform a correspondent’s meaning

In every newspaper “letters to the editor ” have, therefore, to be carefully handled Though an editor is not responsible for the opinions which his correspondents may express he is responsible for conveying, or refusing to convey, them to the public And when such opinions conflict with or contradict the policy of his paper, nice discrimination is required between what

it is expedient and what it is not expedient to publish. As a general rule an editor would rather publish opinions with which he disagrees, and express his dissent editorially, than decline publication if the opinions are at all representative of what is being said and thought. This he will do not only from a sense of fair play but because the correspondence columns of his journal form one of its most valuable features—valuable in more than one sense. “Copy” has to be paid for, and the cost if it figures in every newspaper budget. But the “copy” provided by letters to the editor has not to be paid for, and its interest to readers is often greater than that of special articles or other “features” contributed by paid writers.

Nor does the value of letters to the editor stop here. From the size and quality of his “post bag” a shrewd editor will be able to guess how public opinion is moving among his readers. The volume of abuse or of approval, criticism or encouragement which he receives daily will help him to understand how far the policy of his paper irritates or satisfies its section of the public, and whether dissatisfaction is due to misunderstanding, prejudice or ignorance—or to his own errors. If he be a man of self-governing mind who has thought out a policy before he advocates it, he will not at once trim his sails to catch the wind of public favour but will judge by public disfavour how serious may be the objections to the course he thinks right. No editor is infallible, nor is the public or any section of it. An editor’s task is to serve the public, sometimes by instructing it and leading it whither, for lack of the information he possesses, it is unwilling to go. On the other hand, his special and confidential information may induce him to overlook the broader aspects of a situation which the common sense of his readers enables them to judge more soundly. The daily work of an editor and of his chief assistants in a newspaper office may be more delicate and call for

nicer judgment than that of a Prime Minister and his Cabinet who feel they can rely upon the support of a disciplined party majority in the House of Commons

While matters of policy and a hundred other less important questions are being decided in the higher ranks of a newspaper staff, the work of framing and planning the next day's paper goes on within the limits suggested or laid down by the "business side" Some modern newspapers have followed the American practice of appointing a "managing editor" who, under the proprietor, is supreme over managerial and editorial problems, but in older newspapers the final decision rests with the editor alone If he insists that the projected size of next day's paper is insufficient for the news of the day he can, after consulting the manager, insist that the paper be enlarged As a rule the general planning of next day's paper is done at an "editorial conference" between the editor, the manager, the news editor and the heads of departments in the afternoon. This "editorial conference" should be, and sometimes is, the mainstay of editorship A good editor will find in it a means of keeping in touch with and of inspiring his principal colleagues A rough table of contents will have been prepared for him, together with summaries of the principal home and foreign news. An inefficient or a dictatorial editor will deal with these matters perfunctorily, merely allotting the amount of space to be allowed to this or that subject, and leaving his colleagues in ignorance of the reasons for his policy An efficient editor, on the other hand, who knows how greatly his own efficiency must depend upon the intelligent goodwill of his staff, will lay before his colleagues his own information, discuss policy with them, welcome their criticisms and seek to enlist their enthusiasm in support of an agreed course Thus, instead of allowing his staff to work more or less blindly, each department looking after

its own interests without much care for the whole, he will find all his departments working for the same end and lending to the paper a coherence and a "drive" that he could not have given it by himself. The quality of an editorial conference may make all the difference between a paper that tingles with life and a paper that is dull or dead.

The editorial conference over, the heads of departments return to their several rooms, some to handle early "copy" that has begun to come in from reporters or news agencies, others to deal with correspondence or to receive callers, and others to revise proofs of such matter as has already been set up in type. The editor himself may have appointments to keep with public men or with visitors—who may range from Ministers of the Crown to Ambassadors or explorers—and to discuss with the writers of leading articles how the outstanding topics of the day should be treated. On occasion an editor will feel that he must write a leading article himself, because he alone has all the threads of policy in his hands. More often he will have seen in advance what subject will be uppermost in the public mind on a given day, and will have selected a competent writer to deal with it. No editorial function on a great daily paper demands more tact than the handling of leader writers. Men who have something to say, and are able to say it pithily and well, usually have their own temperaments and ideas. They are artists of a special kind. The best of them are unwilling to write against their own views and convictions, and are filled with resentment when they merely receive verbal or written instructions to say this or that. On the other hand they welcome consultation with their editor if he takes them into his confidence and respects their opinions. According to the way they are treated they may turn out perfunctory platitudes or powerful and convincing presentations of sound ideas. The relationship of an editor to his writing staff is not unlike that of a

conductor to an orchestra, and no editor should suppose that the individual members of his orchestra will play with dash and zest any music he may put before them. His reward will come when, at the end of a night's work, or on the morrow, he feels that his orchestra has played as one man, *con brio*.

All this takes time, and time is as precious in a newspaper office as in a well-managed railway system. No less precious is space, not merely the total space of which an editorial staff may dispose on a given night but the use that is made of it. Here the assistant editors, chief sub-editors and sub-editors have a decisive part to play. Careless sub-editing and the choice of clumsy headlines may waste space which, if properly economised, would allow half a column more matter to be got into a page. A besetting sin of many sub-editors is to write headlines which "turn" unnecessarily, that is, take up two lines of space in conspicuous type where one line, carefully worded, would have been better. In justice to sub-editors, it should be said that their work is often done at high pressure and that they get small thanks for it. They have to reduce to manageable compass the masses of "copy" that pour in upon their desks hour after hour. They have to present it in readable form to the public and so to arrange it that compositors can "set" it without loss of time. Somehow or other this is done. An uninitiated visitor to a newspaper office, glancing at the room of a chief sub-editor might see only a busy man at a desk with a dozen or more colleagues around him. The visitor would not perceive that the busy man was sorting out and distributing various sorts of "copy" to colleagues especially skilled in handling it, or that precious time would be lost if, for instance, a sub-editor of parliamentary reports did not know exactly who's who in politics, or if a "social" sub-editor had not the rank and proper style of people in "Society" at his fingers ends, or if an "ecclesiastical" sub-editor were not at

home in the niceties of the religious world. The sub-editor whose task it may be to compress long-winded political speeches must be expert in winnowing the wheat (if any) from the chaff without distorting the speaker's meaning. And a scientific sub-editor needs to be familiar with all the jargon and sesquipedal terminology in which scientists indulge.

Among the members of a newspaper staff I am inclined to give first place to the sub-editors as a body. Without their devotion and goodwill an editor may be impotent. They can make or mar his paper. They are the infantry who win newspaper battles. Their names rarely reach the public, except in brief obituary notices, but in more ways than one they can justly say of themselves that without their labours "the Press" could not exist. When a sub-editorial staff are really interested in the policy of their paper, or are keen to make the paper "tell" in other respects, they can do more for it than an editor and all his assistants put together. And when, on the other hand, sub-editors are treated as the journeymen of newspaperdom, as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water who have no part nor lot in the higher realms of "policy," they can, by apathy or subtle obstruction, put sand in the wheels of the most perfect technical organisation.

Besides, sub-editors are often splendid craftsmen. It is they, as a rule, who suggest to the night news editor or the "make-up" what items of news are worthy of a "top," that is to say, of being placed at the top of a column with two, three or more headlines. It is they who have to cope with emergencies when an unexpected event, or the death of some eminent person, demands space on pages already overcrowded. If a departed worthy, whose decease is suddenly announced at a late hour, was really eminent or distinguished, the story of his life will have been written beforehand and stored in the office "graveyard." Thence it is fetched, brought

up to date and inserted in an appropriate page, at the cost of other matter already set up and ready for the printer. But when there is no obituary notice in stock the assistant editor or sub-editor in charge of the "graveyard" may be at his wit's end. Everybody who knows or can find out anything about the late lamented is then laid under contribution until a review of his or her life is pieced together, set up, revised and printed.

As the hands of the clock advance towards the fateful hour when the paper must go to press, the strain increases. "Copy" flows out from the sub-editors to the composing room in shorter and shorter snippets. Each snippet bears a number and what is called a "catch line," so that the printers and the "maker-up," may know the sequence in which it should be placed. These snippets may be distributed among a number of compositors, each of whom will set up in a few minutes one or two inches of "metal" from which rough proofs will be pulled and passed at once to the "readers." The task of "readers" is one of the least enviable in a newspaper office. It is to scan the rough proofs, to correct errors in them, to see that they correspond to "copy," that they "read on" in the right order, and to mark with a query any spelling, punctuation or passage which may seem not to make sense or to be obviously out of place.

"Readers" must therefore be men of considerable education and with a wide range of knowledge. According to a rule which is almost invariable they are not allowed to comment upon or to "query" the subject of an article or otherwise to express any opinion upon the merits of the matter they correct. So strict is this rule in most newspaper offices that a "reader" who goes beyond his last may land himself in serious trouble. In general the rule is sound though it can be too rigorously observed and applied. While confusion or chaos might

ensue if a dozen or more "readers" were free to put their spoke in the editorial wheel and to criticise or to suggest improvements in articles or reports, there are cases in which an intelligent "reader" may, by ignoring the rule, render real service to his editor. I can remember at least one instance in which this happened. It had a pathetic as well as a comic side. A bold "reader" sent up to his editor a query whether one part of a passage that had been quoted in a leading article really bore upon the subject of the article at all. Seeing that the query was justified the editor deleted the superfluous passage and, when the paper had gone to press, sent the chief messenger to fetch the "reader." By some magic he had vanished. So the chief messenger was instructed to find him next night and bring him to the editor's room. Next night the chief messenger reported that no trace of him could be found. "I am sorry," said the editor, "I wanted to thank him." In the twinkling of an eye the "reader" was produced from behind the door of the composing room, saying apologetically that he "did not mean any harm." He had feared reprimand or dismissal.

Now the hour of going to press is at hand. The head printer in charge has made all his periodical reports to the editor upon "the state of the paper." The early pages have long since "gone away" to the stereotypers. The later pages are "made up" and are being screwed into their "chases," with headlines of proper width and in type of appropriate sizes. The last "galley proofs" of the latest pages are coming up in rapid succession. Warning has been given to the various departments that the composing room can "take no more copy for this edition." Still, parliamentary reports, telegrams or telephone messages from abroad, and many interesting odds and ends, are flowing in and, if at all possible, must be got into the paper somehow. So the "maker-

up," often an assistant-editor who decides what matter shall be placed upon what pages, has quickly to decide how to act, what "metal" shall be cut down and how much of the new matter shall be set up and put in. The nice adjustments he has previously made are upset. The whole balance of the paper may be endangered. "Metal" is not elastic—save in so far as it may have been "leaded out" so as to give greater prominence to the news or views it represents—and the steel chases which surround the metal type of a page are more rigid still.

Then eloquent paragraphs may vanish from speeches, shorter letters to the editor may have to replace longer letters, or even a leading article may have to be "dropped." The printers hustle and bustle to make these changes neatly and in time. Their dexterity must be seen to be believed. When they are almost ready, and but a few minutes remain before the last steel chases enclosing the metal type—and now called "formes"—remain to be pushed along the "stone," or steel table that leads to the stereotyping room, news of some world-shaking occurrence may come in, and the work of adjustment has to be done over again. The "maker-up" and the night news editor rush to and for, or telephone to the sub-editors to hurry up. The sub-editors need no urging. By dint of vigorous skill the seemingly impossible is achieved, everything is ready at last—when the editor decides that some allusion to the great event must be made in a "leader." There may be no time or space even for a short "leader" on the subject. Something has to "come out of" a leader already written and composed, so as to make room for something to "go in." Out "it" comes and in "it" goes, literally by the sweat of somebody's brow. Then the metal once more fits the chase, the "forme" is screwed up, locked and pushed away to the stereotypers. In a few minutes a "matrix" of it is made, a semi-circular stereoplate

cast from the "matrix," cooled, trimmed, shaved, passed down to the press room and fixed on one-half of a waiting cylinder. A button is pressed, the electric current switched on, and the huge printing press begins softly to hum until, as it and its fellow gather speed, a dull rumble reverberates through the building.

This is what Kipling called "the loaded hour" of "the midnight stress." Moments of relaxation succeed it for the majority of the "night staff." They may "light their pipes in the morning calm," discuss the paper that has just come off the presses, and suggest improvements for the next editions before they tidy up and go home. The editorial offices grow strangely quiet. The members of the staff on late duty flit like phantoms through the empty rooms that have been filled with workers for so many hours. But down in the press room, the packing room, and in the courtyard, where a fleet of motor vans and lorries is waiting, the rush goes on. The swiftly revolving presses devour mile after mile of newsprint; and quire after quire of the newspaper, its pages cut and neatly folded, issue from them. The earliest copies, called "vouchers," have been scanned by the chief printer and sent to the editor and to the chief editorial departments to be examined for defects or mistakes that must be put right as soon as the first "run" of the machines can be checked. To stop a "run" before the number of copies required for a given edition are printed is a costly business. It may mean missing trains or otherwise retarding delivery. Sometimes, indeed, a defect in a roll of paper will cause it to break. Then the whole press room may resemble an Arctic blizzard, for the whirling paper is apt to be torn into thousands of scraps before the machine can be stopped and the break repaired. Such incidents are now rare; than they used to be, so precise is the working of the giant presses and so even the tension of the paper. But when an incident of this kind happens the resource-

fulness of a printing staff is revealed. No crew of a battleship could handle an emergency more smartly than do the men who tend the presses.

If all goes smoothly the quires of printed papers pass to the packing room, where expert packers arrange them in bundles, securely bound up and addressed, while the copies destined for individual postal subscribers are wrapped and addressed for delivery to the General Post Office. The vans and lorries, each with its load of bundles, roar away to the principal railway termini, and return for later editions. Next morning, throughout the greater part of the country, newspaper readers find "their" papers delivered by breakfast time or pick them up at railway bookstalls, sometimes to grumble if "their" paper is late or to wonder why "a little more care" was not taken with the wording of an article or with the presentation of news.

There is grumbling and grumbling. Sometimes I wish the public could know enough of the technique of newspaper production to grumble because things that might have been done have not been done. Then circulations of bad or inefficient newspapers might fall off, and those of better newspapers increase. Of what can be done by an efficient newspaper two illustrations may be given. Late one evening, not very long ago, an important Minister made a speech in a northern city upon a matter of urgent national importance. He recognised gratefully the support which the Government had received from the Leader of the Opposition in the organisation of national defence and admitted that both the reasons for the support and the conditions attached to it were just and sound. It was a speech which revealed a high degree of national unity at a critical moment upon a vital issue. Had it been properly handled by all the chief national newspapers it would have made a salutary impression abroad. Owing to the lateness of the hour the reports

of the speech seem not to have reached London newspapers before they had gone to press with their earlier "country editions." At all events, only two London newspapers—one an opposition journal of the "popular" and the other a ministerial organ of the "serious" sort—dealt with it adequately. The "popular" newspaper "splashed" it on the front page, the "serious" newspaper, with a keen editorial staff, knocked its earlier editions to pieces and printed the salient passages of the speech in bold type on a central page with appropriate comment. Another "serious" ministerial organ, with a less efficient staff, printed only a meagre and misleading summary of the speech in small type in an obscure position. If the readers of this newspaper had "grumbled" effectively they might have helped to keep that newspaper and its editorial staff up to the mark.

The other illustration is less recent. It passed almost unnoted by the readers of the paper in question though not by its rivals or its staff. A critical stage had been reached in a Parliamentary debate upon a Bill embodying an important agreement with a British Dominion. The vote for and against the second reading of the Bill was soon to be taken, and there was no telling which way it would go. One influential morning newspaper was fiercely hostile to the agreement, and under its attacks the Parliamentary majority were wavering. Another influential paper was supporting the agreement on the ground that, if ratified, it would help to safeguard national and imperial interests for generations to come. Pressure on space had been unusually severe for some weeks, and the staff of the paper which supported the agreement were as weary as journalists can ever allow themselves to be. After another day and night of strain they drew a sigh of relief when, at last, the hum of the presses could be heard and felt.

At that moment a news agency reported a peculiarly

offensive attempt on the part of a leading personage in the Dominion concerned to perturb British feeling and to wreck the agreement Unless something were done at once the prospect of Parliamentary ratification would be small, for the vote might be taken next evening So the editor—to the dismay of the head printer—ordered the presses to be stopped while the two principal pages were “brought back” and got ready to take the news of the wrecking attempt and a leading article upon it This decision meant the loss of many thousand copies of the paper and the missing of early trains to the Provinces

So efficient was that newspaper staff that in less than half an hour the presses were running again with an edition containing the news, prominently printed, and a fresh leading article which placed the wrecker’s attempt in its true light, and urged Parliament to answer it by ratifying the agreement without delay A few minutes later the new leading article was being cabled to all the morning papers of the Dominion in question Next evening Parliament ratified the agreement

Things of this kind can be done when an editor and his staff work as a team for the success of their journal and for a policy they approve of Otherwise the best machinery and the highest technical skill may be unavailing But when a day in a newspaper office is like a rehearsal of a new symphony by an orchestra well conducted and keyed up to concert pitch, it can be a day of tingling experience and satisfying achievement, for the newspaper that issues from the presses at the end of it is a living force in the life of a nation and even of the world The “companions of the Press” who make such newspapers can justly feel—again in Kipling’s phrase—that they “sit down at the heart of men and things” and there abide

CHAPTER XII

THE IDEAL NEWSPAPER

THROUGHOUT this book I have tried to suggest the ideal which journalism should serve and, in the light of it, to show where the British Press falls short. I know well that criticism is easy and achievement hard, and I can imagine that some over-worked journalist, acutely conscious of the restrictions and pitfalls which beset him, will testily reply "A truce to your theorising! What sort of a paper would *you* make if you had the chance and a free hand? Suppose you were Thomasson with his *Tribune*, or Alfred Harmsworth with his budding *Daily Mail*, or Levy Lawson with his *Daily Telegraph*—what, under present conditions, would you do to gain freedom for a commercialised Press?"

This would be a fair question. To answer it in theory would not be difficult. To put the answer successfully into practice would be another matter. Not all journalists have the knack of newspaper-making. W. T. Stead, for instance, was a journalist and an editor of genius, yet he failed dismally as the founder of a newspaper. I am not at all sure that I have in me the stuff of a commercially successful newspaper-maker such as were, in their several ways, John Walter II of *The Times*, Levy Lawson of the *Telegraph*, Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World*, Adolf Ochs of the *New York Times*, and Alfred Harmsworth of the *Daily Mail*, or, to take present examples, such as are Lord Beaverbrook of the *Daily Express* and Lord Camrose of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*. All these men have

"made good" with newspapers as business undertakings, and some of them were and are real journalists. All the same, I am not fully persuaded that outstanding commercial success is the best criterion of a good newspaper. The *Westminster Gazette*, for example, could never pay its way, yet what journalist would say that it was not an admirable paper. The *Manchester Guardian*, in and by itself, is not believed ever to have been a gold mine for its owners, but I know of no better newspaper in any country. The ideal would be to hit upon the sort of newspaper that should be able to make ends meet without conceding anything of its journalistic integrity to considerations of money-making.

Like most journalists who dream dreams I wonder sometimes what kind of paper I should try to turn out if I had, say, a million pounds or more to play with, and could either start a paper of my own or take over and transform an existing journal. Would it be possible, under the present conditions of the "newspaper industry," for a paper to rise superior to those conditions or to turn them to account in such fashion as to restore and to safeguard the freedom of the Press? It ought to be possible, though I am ready to admit that the man who should do it might need far higher ability than I could command. The need of the hour may call forth the man—or it may not. During the Great War there was urgent need for a military commander of outstanding ability or genius among the Allied armies. If he did not appear was it or was it not because conditions were too complicated for any man to master?

Early in 1921, a few weeks before the centenary of Napoleon's death, I asked Marshal Foch (who knew more about Napoleon than any of the other Allied Generals) whether he thought that Napoleon would have done better than he had done as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied and Associated Armies in the closing

period of the War, or whether modern conditions would have made Napoleon look small. Foch answered that he had often put this very question to himself when he passed before Napoleon's tomb at the Invalides during the War, and had come to the conclusion that Napoleon's infinite capacity for taking pains would have enabled him to master modern war conditions in about six weeks. Then, said Foch, "he would have invented some new trick, found some new dodge, and would have knocked the astonished enemy head over heels."

In much the same way, I think, a newspaper-maker of genius would grasp and utilise the complicated conditions of modern newspaper-making and would discomfit his industry-bound rivals before they could guess how he had done it. His success would depend upon his power to read the minds of the rising generation, to express their own thoughts for them, and to lead them whither they would fain go if they only knew the way.

Not long ago the writer of a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* lamented that nowadays people feel the lack of an ideal to live for or, if need be, to die for. Their lives, he argued, lack spiritual quality. I think this lament well-founded. People are bewildered and disheartened. They, especially the young, throw themselves into every kind of sport and amusement, the riskier the better. Many of them try to keep themselves "fit," though few of them could answer the artist's question to a sturdy young fellow who had wondered how the artist could get on without exercise, and had said "It takes me all my time to keep fit." "Fit for what?" enquired the artist. Many become "air-minded," heedless of crashes, or drive "sports cars" at break-neck speed. Their elders dance "hot jazz" or seek mental exercise in doing "cross-word puzzles." In regard to public affairs they have no reasoned standpoint, and in politics, which ought to mean care for

public affairs, they have no well-thought-out creed. Nationalism, as such, they do not find wholly satisfying. Communism attracts comparatively few, while the appeal of its milder version, Socialism, has lost glamour. Still less does Nazism or Fascism strike them as a panacea. Of liberal principles they know too little to find them a source of inspiration though unconsciously most of them are liberal in tendency. While pacifism is alien to their temperaments, the senselessness of war estranges them. They seek something bigger than themselves to which they can devote themselves—and seek it in vain. Literature and the pulpit, politicians and Parliament, philosophers and scientists offer them pebbles in place of bread, and the growing mechanisation of life curtails their opportunities for creative activity.

The Press reflects all this disjointed aimlessness, and ministers to it without rising above it. Here is a chance for a newspaper-maker of vision with an ideal and a purpose of his own, both of which he might perhaps hide in his heart lest they be mocked by fools before he could vindicate them. The newspaper I dream of would reflect the distractions of modern life no less faithfully than existing papers reflect them, but it would treat them as distractions, not as the things that matter. It would search out the truths behind these appearances and proclaim them, sparing no shams, respecting no conventions solely because they happened to be conventions, giving honour where honour might be due, but calling cant and humbug by their names.

It would be quite fearless. It would not "hedge" in its treatment of thorny subjects, and if, as would be inevitable, it made mistakes, it would avow them. It would accept only such advertisements as it thought honest, so that its acceptance of them would be a moral guarantee to advertisers and to readers alike. Net sales certificates it would steadfastly refuse to publish, and it would scorn to canvass for subscribers or to offer

them free insurance or other benefits. If advertisers or their agents should seek to bring it to heel, it would publish their names, and it would ruthlessly expose all underhand "business" practices that came to its knowledge. A good part of its capital would be spent in winning the confidence of young and eager minds who would soon learn to trust its judgment and to heed its counsel. From its first "editorial" column to the last it would be a militant journal, tied to no "interests," careless of hostility, sure that none would be able to ignore it.

My newspaper would, of course, make every effort to get the news, and would put its main news on the front page—where it ought to be. It would not fear to print several consecutive columns of one good "story." It would treat with contempt the time-wasting device of sending readers from one page to another so as to put the beginning of a different "story" at the top of every column. Nor would it cheat its readers by superabundant headlines or by vain repetitions. Good and careful typography can help readers to see what is in a paper without defrauding them of reading matter.

My ideal newspaper would give "all the news that's fit to print" as vividly as possible, whether the news suited its "policy" or not. For its policy would fit the facts, it would not suppress or gloss over facts to suit "policy." In cases of doubt whether discretion might not be the better part of publicity it would give publicity the benefit of the doubt. To no Government, statesman or person would it lend support for other than public reasons, publicly stated. It would be the servant of the public, to whose welfare alone it would acknowledge allegiance, albeit without the misguided sycophancy that flatters an imaginary public and assumes that readers "would not stand" plain speaking. A faithful servant tells his master the truth.

My paper would be national, not nationalist It would be liberal, not Liberal It would strive for Peace, without pacifism. It would make clear the vital things for which nations and men may fitly fight and fitly die, if there be no other way of upholding them Never would it fall into the grievous error of thinking the avoidance of conflict the same thing as peace Against the brutal stupidity of the war-method of dealing with disputes between nations it would strive with all its might, yet always remembering that the hearts of men will never be weaned from war, with its spirit of life-risking adventure, unless peace enlist the spirit of self-devotion and self-sacrifice in ways worthier than those of war My newspaper would seek to link the nations not only against war but in defence of individual freedom and of human right, so as to open the way for constructive international helpfulness, just as, in matters national and social, it would work to harness all classes of citizens to the task of constructive improvement in the edifice of society

Could such a paper as this—technically well-made, trustworthy, news-giving, hard-hitting, full of vim and drive—hope to gain a circulation sufficient to command, not to solicit, enough advertisement revenue to balance its budget? I think it could, provided it were rich enough to “stand the racket” until it had won its public

One day, perchance, some newspaper-making genius with a soul of his own will do something like this Then our advertisement-courting, dividend-seeking, circulation-mongers will rub their eyes and wonder how it has been done Till then my ideal newspaper may remain in the realm of the ideal, and the British Press—if, indeed, it escape totalitarian servitude—will plod along its pedestrian way far below the breezy heights whereunto the heart of every true journalist aspires

POSTSCRIPT, OCTOBER 14, 1938

SINCE these lines were written in mid-September the British Press has—with one or two notable exceptions—made further progress on the road that leads to totalitarian servitude. Though we are not yet in a state of war, and though every national and humanitarian interest demanded that British newspapers should assert their independence by giving full expression to the feelings of the public during the international crisis, the great majority of our newspapers toned down the news and withheld frank comment upon it. This they did partly in response to suggestions “confidentially” made by some clandestine organisation that represents, or pretends to represent, the views of official quarters. No newspaper, as far as I am aware, has denounced in public this impertinent meddling with the freedom of responsible journalism.

On the early afternoon of Sunday, October 9, the German Dictator, Herr Hitler, fortified by the Munich Agreement and by the scrap of paper which he and the British Prime Minister had signed—publicly told Great Britain to mind her own business and not to meddle with Germany’s business, and, on pain of German displeasure, he placed his veto upon the return to office of three prominent British public men.

When this news was broadcast on the evening of Sunday, October 9, the whole nation was moved to wrath. Of the depth of its wrath hardly a hint was given next morning in the leading British newspapers, some of which were almost apologetic. Enquiry into this humiliating behaviour on the part of our “free Press” elicited the information that certain large

advertising agents had warned journals for which they provide much revenue that advertisements would be withheld from them should they "play up" the international crisis and cause an alarm which was "bad for trade" None of the newspapers thus warned dared to publish the names of these advertisement agents or to hold them up to public contempt And this at a moment when it is of the utmost national importance to unite the country in defence of its freedom and, maybe, of its independent existence !

Never since the distant days of Ethelred the Unready, and the later days of Charles II, have more humiliating pages of British history been written than those which bear the record of the past few weeks Of Ethelred the Unready and the period of Danegeld the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle said "All these calamities fell upon us because of evil counsel, because tribute was not offered to them (the Danes) at the right time nor yet were they resisted, but when they had done the most evil, then was peace made with them "

Of evil counsel there has been no lack during recent years "Leading" organs of the British Press have offered it in plenty It would remain only for them to accept with dutiful submissiveness the claim which Herr Hitler has already put forward, and may soon renew, that unless the British Government wishes to incur German hostility it must so control British newspapers as to prevent them from taking exception to anything Herr Hitler may say or do

Fortunately, there are signs that a spirit of revolt against this foreign dictation is stirring, albeit obscurely as yet, in one at least of our "leading journals" May this spirit spread until the Press begins once again truly to represent the mind of the people, and until it finds courage to serve neither the timidity nor the dictatorial itch of Governments but the public to whom alone it owes allegiance.

W S.

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